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General Assembly
Fifty-first Session
Official Records

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New York

President: Mr. Razali Ismail . . . . (Malaysia)

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Address by Mr. Glafcos Clerides, President of the Republic of Cyprus

The President: The Assembly will first hear an address by the President of the Republic of Cyprus.

Mr. Glafcos Clerides, President of the Republic of Cyprus, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the Republic of Cyprus, His Excellency Mr. Glafcos Clerides, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Clerides: I would like to begin by extending to you, Sir, my warmest congratulations on your election as President of the General Assembly. We are certain that your long experience, outstanding ability and diplomatic skill will guide us successfully in our work at this fifty-first session of the General Assembly. Allow me also to thank your predecessor, Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral, for his untiring efforts during the previous session.

At last year's session, which marked the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, we reflected on the birth of the United Nations, assessed its development and influence on international relations to date, paid tribute to its achievements and identified some of its difficulties. At the same time, we acknowledged that our main responsibility for the future of the Organization is to insure that it has the ability to address most effectively the agenda of the twenty-first century.

In the Declaration on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations, we agreed that

> "In order to be able to respond effectively to the challenges of the future and the expectations of the United Nations held by peoples around the world, it is essential that the United Nations itself be reformed and modernized." (*resolution 50/6, para. 14*)

Now, as we begin the fifty-first session of the General Assembly, we should take stock of what we have been able to accomplish and redirect our efforts to what remains to be achieved.

In 1996, we have continued our work towards the institutional and financial reforms needed to make the United Nations a more productive and dynamic institution so that it will be better able to perform its key functions and fulfil its mandates more effectively. In this regard, the fundamental priority must be to ensure that the financing of our Organization is placed on a firm and lasting base.

May I recall in this context that the Government of the Republic of Cyprus is voluntarily contributing one third of the total cost of the United Nations Peace-

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keeping Force in Cyprus and, in addition, has increased by one third its contribution to United Nations peace-keeping operations in general.

During 1996, various high-level working groups of the General Assembly have continued their efforts on the institutional and financial reforms of the United Nations. I would like to reiterate that we consider the work of these working groups, covering a very broad spectrum of issues, to be extremely important. Such issues, ranging from the strengthening of the main United Nations organs to the further development of an Agenda for Peace and an Agenda for Development, deserve deep and profound priority consideration.

We subscribe to the need to reform the Security Council, to expand it and strengthen its capacity to discharge the duties assigned to it by the Charter for the maintenance of international peace and security. As for the reform of its working methods, we recognize, that although significant efforts have been made over the past two years to ensure greater transparency and broader consultations with non-members, more remains to be done. A good precedent has been established with the holding of briefings and regular consultations, including those with countries that contribute troops to United Nations peacekeeping operations.

The reports of the working groups of the General Assembly and the proposals from Member States that we have before us provide a good basis for further work. We all understand and accept the need to reform and revitalize our Organization. Our responsibility, then, is quite clear: Let us make even more vigorous efforts and display the courage and political will required to reach a successful conclusion on these issues.

This year's international conferences — HABITAT II, the World Food Summit and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development — have marked the completion of a comprehensive series of United Nations-sponsored conferences which covered the full range of civil, political, economic and social issues that affect the peoples of the world. We attach great importance to the successful follow-up to United Nations-sponsored conferences and their impact on those areas of the world where the lack of economic and social development often contributes to conflict. In this respect, we welcome next year's General Assembly special session, which will be devoted to the assessment and review of Agenda 21 and of the results of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. It will be a unique opportunity to take stock of what we have done so far to implement the recommendations agreed upon in that all-important Conference.

An area of particular concern in today's world is the persistent violation of human rights. The human rights agenda has for many years been dominated by efforts to establish international standards. Our duty must be to implement these standards unequivocally and to take a firm stand against all forms of human rights violations in all cases. The full implementation of the commitments entered into will encourage those around the world who believe in the promise of the United Nations to help restore and keep the peace, to promote respect for human rights, to expand and broaden social progress, and to help those in urgent need. My country is fully committed to the universal application and promotion of these principles.

Another area of particular concern to Member States is arms control and disarmament. Under the auspices of the United Nations, the nuclear non-proliferation regime has been further strengthened by the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. We warmly welcome the adoption by the General Assembly of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. This represents the international community's determination to bring to completion one of the most sought-after nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament measures in the history of the United Nations. But the Treaty is not the end of the process. There is need for further systematic and progressive effort in order to achieve our ultimate goal of the elimination of nuclear weapons and of general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control.

Another important development in the field of disarmament and arms control is progress achieved towards the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention. Cyprus is in the final stages of ratifying this Convention. It is our hope that it will soon enter into force. While recognizing that much more needs to be done in the realm of conventional weapons, we are encouraged by the progress made during the review of the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or To Have Indiscriminate Effects and the agreement on Guidelines for international arms transfers at this year's United Nations Disarmament Commission's session.

We fully share the view espoused by many that arms control and disarmament are and will continue to be essential components of international security, contributing to confidence-building and conflict resolution. It is in this spirit that we proposed, as part of a comprehensive solution to the Cyprus problem, the complete demilitarization of the Republic of Cyprus, in which we have offered to disband the National Guard of Cyprus and hand over all weapons to an international force in exchange for the complete withdrawal of all foreign troops, as demanded by the relevant United Nations resolutions.

This body is familiar with the Secretary-General's report which characterizes the northern occupied part of Cyprus as one of the most densely militarized areas in the world. The presence of 35,000 Turkish troops and hundreds of tanks and other armaments constitutes a clear and present danger to peace and security in Cyprus and in the region. Recent events in Cyprus have highlighted this clear danger as well as the urgent need to implement our demilitarization proposal. This year's twenty-second anniversary of the invasion and occupation of substantial territory of the Republic of Cyprus by Turkish forces was marked by the brutal killings of two Greek-Cypriot unarmed demonstrators, witnessed on television screens by the entire world, and the wounding of many others, including two United Nations peace-keepers, by the Turkish occupation troops and Turkish extremists imported from mainland Turkey to the occupied part of the island.

Two United Nations reports on these tragic incidents state clearly that the responsibility lies with Turkey and the illegal Turkish-Cypriot regime, which used excessive and unwarranted force against unarmed demonstrators who were simply trying to remind the world that for 22 years Cyprus has remained a divided country whose people are still prevented by the Turkish occupation forces from returning to their homes and lands and from moving freely in their country. Furthermore, it has by now become abundantly clear that the Turkish action was orchestrated well in advance and involved the import from Turkey of 3,000 terrorists belonging to the Gray Wolves organization with the goal of provoking bloody confrontation between Greek and Turkish Cypriots. This sinister plan was aimed at demonstrating that the two communities cannot live peacefully together in Cyprus and therefore separatist and partitionist solutions should be sought.

While we mourn and condemn the brutal murder of the two unarmed Greek Cypriot protesters, we also feel sorry for the subsequent killing of a Turkish soldier and the wounding of another. We regret the haste with which the Turkish Cypriot leader, Mr. Denktaş, attempted to attribute responsibility for this killing to the Greek Cypriot side before an independent United Nations investigation published its findings. The recent tragic events, however, will not cause us to waver from our commitment to seek a peaceful solution of the Cyprus problem through negotiations, as provided by the United Nations resolutions. These events only highlight the need to expedite and increase efforts to find a just, lasting and workable solution to the Cyprus problem.

We are encouraged by the rekindled interest and more active engagement of the international community in the Cyprus problem, as witnessed by the appointments of Special Representatives from interested countries, including the appointment of the Secretary-General's Special Representative, Mr. Han Sung-Joo. We welcome all initiatives set out to reinforce the United Nations in the search for a just and viable solution to the Cyprus question.

Various United Nations resolutions, and the United Nations Secretary-General himself, have declared the present status quo in Cyprus unacceptable, a view shared by the international community. The time has come to make a further determined and sustained effort to solve the Cyprus problem. To that end, the Government of the Republic of Cyprus will be working earnestly and imaginatively with the United Nations Special Representative and with all others supporting its efforts to prepare the ground for negotiations on the main outstanding issues.

Any settlement of the Cyprus problem should be based on a State of Cyprus with a single sovereignty, an international personality and a single citizenship. Its independence and territorial integrity must be safeguarded, and it must be composed of two politically equal communities, as described in the relevant Security Council resolutions, in a bicommunal and bi-zonal federation. Such settlement must exclude union, in whole or in part, with any other country or any form of partition or secession.

The security of both communities is a crucial issue, which would be helpful in finding a solution. It will be necessary to devise effective guarantees; demilitarization and the stationing in Cyprus of an international force will also be required. Demilitarization represents an important contribution to this settlement.

We are prepared to embark on face-to-face negotiations in 1997 once the ground has been sufficiently prepared to ensure success. We are not, however, willing, after 22 years of negotiations that have yielded no results on the main issues of the problem, to embark on another round of fruitless talks. On the one hand, they destroy the credibility of the negotiating process, and on the other, they keep the attention of the international community focused on the intercommunal constitutional aspect of the problem, thus overshadowing the real issue — the invasion and continued occupation, for 22 years, of substantial territory of the Republic of Cyprus by the Turkish forces.

We, for our part, will continue to do everything in our power to help the Secretary-General of our Organization to succeed in his renewed efforts, through his newly appointed Special Representative, in the search for a lasting solution to the Cyprus problem.

At the same time the Government of the Republic of Cyprus will pursue its application for membership in the European Union, because such membership will have benefits for both communities. While we hope to keep accession negotiations to the timetable already foreseen, we earnestly desire to reach a solution to our problem before accession.

At the beginning of my statement, I spoke of the need to reform and strengthen our Organization. From this rostrum, I have repeatedly underlined the importance of honouring the commitments we enter into and of implementing the decisions we take. I have stressed how essential it is to uphold the principles of the United Nations Charter and to hold to full account those who violate them.

The question of Cyprus continues to be such a case of accountability, due to the refusal of Turkey to implement solemn Security Council and General Assembly resolutions calling for, among other things, the respect of the sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and unity of the Republic of Cyprus, the withdrawal of all foreign troops, the return of the refugees to their homes and lands, the respect of the demographic composition of the Republic and the restoration of the basic human rights and fundamental freedoms of the people of Cyprus. In fact, not only has Turkey not implemented these resolutions, but it has grossly violated them. Even the immense humanitarian problem of the missing persons remains unresolved, perpetuating the tragedy of their relatives. All efforts should therefore be exerted by the Security Council, and by all those in a position to do so, to bring about a real change in Turkey's attitude.

The fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations has highlighted the need to maintain and reinforce our faith and that of future generations in our Organization. Implementation of United Nations decisions will go a long way towards achieving this lofty goal.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank His Excellency the President of the Republic of Cyprus for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Glafcos Clerides, President of the Republic of Cyprus, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 9 ***(continued)***

General debate

The President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Italy, His Excellency Mr. Lamberto Dini.

Mr. Dini (Italy): On behalf of Italy, I am pleased to express to you, Sir, my warmest congratulations on your election to the presidency of this session of the General Assembly. Your extensive and widely recognized knowledge and experience of the activities and functions of the United Nations is the best guarantee of your success. At the same time, allow me to sincerely thank your predecessor, Professor Diogo Freitas do Amaral of Portugal, who so ably led the historic fiftieth session of the General Assembly.

In addition, I should like to express our great appreciation for the inspiring role and constructive leadership of the United Nations provided by Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali.

Italy shares and fully supports the statement made before the General Assembly on Tuesday by the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Ireland on behalf of the European Union. At the special commemorative meeting for the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, there was a solemn reaffirmation of the need for the United Nations to implement significant changes to keep step with the new global realities. Italy believes that the time has come to translate ideas into urgently needed reforms. Let me briefly address them.

The General Assembly is the most representative expression of the values of our Organization. Therefore, we believe that the General Assembly must increasingly reflect the opinions of our peoples and become more democratic through direct links to the institutional realities of its Member States. The Italian delegation to the General Assembly, for example, includes representatives of both the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies of our Parliament, which helps our political forces to have a fuller appreciation for the role and activities of the United Nations. We hope that this practice, which is also followed by certain other countries, becomes more widespread and consolidated.

The General Assembly's subsidiary bodies should be simplified, merging some committees while streamlining the agenda. Greater transparency is needed in relations between the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Secretariat.

At the same time, we believe that the Secretariat should be restructured, so as to organize resources and functions around two focal points: on the one hand, peace and security; and on the other, democracy and development. In this context, Italy proposes that the three economic and social departments of the United Nations Secretariat should be merged into a single entity under the leadership of a Deputy Secretary-General, who would also act as the Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Council.

Italy is actively committed to Security Council reform and has presented a detailed proposal inspired by the fundamental principles of democracy, equitable geographical representation, efficiency and transparency.

Reform should not lead to the establishment of new regimes of privilege, which would diminish rather than increase equitable representation on the Council. Last April, in his address before the General Assembly, the President of the Republic of Italy, Oscar Luigi Scalfaro, warned that stressing the elitist nature of the Council

> "could widen the gap and thus reduce the interest of the excluded, demeaning their political commitment in the process and perhaps marginalizing them and giving them the dangerous feeling that they are token presences, mere spectators." *(Official Records of the General Assembly, Fiftieth Session, Plenary Meetings, 103rd meeting, p. 3-4)*

Our goal instead must be to stimulate a greater involvement of all countries, large and small, through a rotation mechanism.

The Italian proposal would maintain a central role for the General Assembly. In fact, it would be up to the General Assembly to decide, on the basis of objective criteria, which countries could rotate more frequently. It would be up to the General Assembly to elect these countries, by a two-thirds majority and by secret ballot, in a truly democratic way. And it would be up to the General Assembly periodically to review the countries in question.

The Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council has found it difficult to reach a consensus. Italy considers its proposal a balanced way of reconciling the new international realities, namely the emergence of countries with notable political and economic capacities — and I include Italy among them — and the rise in developing countries, a full 132 of which are Member States of the United Nations today. However, we are willing to discuss and adhere to a formula that is not inconsistent with the fundamental principles that govern our own proposal.

A new generation of peace-keeping has begun. From its original role as a force of interposition, peace-keeping has gradually taken on the broader tasks of pacification, support for the process of national reconciliation, and today the protection of populations threatened by inter-ethnic conflicts. Italy believes that in confronting these tasks every Member State should responsibly consider making, and be prepared to make, larger and more qualified military contingents available to the United Nations. Italy is capable of doing its part, as demonstrated in Mozambique and in Bosnia.

To make United Nations actions more effective in this field, Italy proposes the following 10 concrete measures which would be designed to: involve troop-contributing countries in the decision-making process; conduct annual reviews of the mission, mandate, and means of peace-keeping operations; have readily deployable military forces available as soon as Security Council decisions are made; create a reliable and unified command structure for peace-keeping operations; expand logistical support for peace-keeping operations; prioritize training programmes for peace-keeping personnel; improve the financing of peace-keeping operations; fill the gap between peace-keeping and post-conflict peace-building; entrust certain peace-keeping operations to regional organizations; and, finally, enhance cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity (OAU).

To go into these points more at length, first of all we are glad that the Security Council, as suggested by Italy and other countries, has made it a regular practice to hold consultations with troop-contributing countries before adopting decisions on peace-keeping operations. The next step is a formal mechanism that guarantees the participation of troop-contributing countries in the decision-making process. In this connection, Italy will lend its full support to the proposal put forward by the Prime Minister of Norway, Mrs. Brundtland, for an annual seminar to focus on the three M's of peace-keeping: Mission, Mandate and Means.

The United Nations must be ready to deal with conflicts where and when they break out, and to this end, it must be able to count on readily available military forces, as provided for by Article 43 of the Charter of the United Nations. We would also support the establishment, as suggested by Canada, of a headquarters module for peace-keeping at the United Nations Secretariat, whose composition should respect the principle of equitable geographical representation.

Italy intends to promote specific proposals to expand logistical support, on the strength of its experience with the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) and the Implementation Force (IFOR). Already, we have made available the first United Nations logistic base in Brindisi, which should be further expanded to ensure efficient resource management for peace-keeping operations and we suggest a separate allocation in peace-keeping budgets for the creation of logistic bases.

The training of peace-keeping personnel is the duty of the United Nations Staff College in Turin, which was created on the Secretary-General's initiative. The College is receiving the maximum support of the Italian Government and will hopefully receive the support of other Member States as well. Financing of peace-keeping operations could be improved through a peace-keeping surcharge for new, frequently rotating Security Council members, as Italy has proposed. This would distribute the burden of the surcharge to a larger number of countries.

Another essential component of peace-keeping is humanitarian assistance during and immediately after a conflict. Between the management of a conflict and post-conflict peace-building there is a gap. To fill just such a gap in Central America, Italy designed and funded the Development Progress for Displaced Persons, Refugees and Returnees (PRODERE) programme, which contributed substantially to the process of reconciliation. A model effort of the same type is now under way in Mozambique.

Closer coordination with regional organizations could help provide the United Nations with the human and material resources it needs. Without detracting from the United Nations central role, certain peace-keeping and peace-enforcement operations should be entrusted to regional organizations or coalitions. A good example of this is the success of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in fulfilling the mandate it was given by the United Nations in the former Yugoslavia, where the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe has also played an increasing and important role.

Italy hopes for growing dialogue between the Organization of African Unity and the United Nations, and a strengthening of the peace-keeping capabilities of African countries. The OAU must be concretely helped to enhance its mechanism for conflict prevention and crisis management. In line with Italy's traditional support for democratic development, we are planning a broad series of initiatives in Africa aimed at supporting parliamentary activities and strengthening judicial structures and training.

The United Nations is a global system, and it pursues global objectives. Conflict prevention and the promotion of peaceful solutions to controversies cannot be pursued solely at the political and military level. The conditions for peace are found, perhaps primarily, in the economic, social and cultural development of peoples. Poverty, underdevelopment, and cultural isolation disrupt relations between countries and thus constitute threats to international peace.

Through its funds, programmes, and specialized agencies, the United Nations plays a vital role in preventing these obstacles from jeopardizing peaceful coexistence. It helps restore the conditions for orderly global development after disruptions caused by internal and international conflicts. Italy appreciates the importance of both prevention and post-conflict reconstruction, and is determined to strengthen its collaboration with the United Nations specialized agencies.

With this in mind Italy has chosen the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as one of the main points of reference for the reconstruction of the city of Mostar. Collaboration with the cultural agency of the United Nations will also prove valuable in other areas of the former Yugoslavia on projects to reconstruct prestigious landmarks such as the Sarajevo library and historic buildings in Ragusa/ Dubrovnik.

The reform process also concerns the economic and social fields of the United Nations. The adoption of resolution 50/227 is a significant step forward, especially where it refers to strengthening the role of the Economic and Social Council. Special attention should be paid to the operative follow-up to this resolution.

The identification of priorities by the United Nations, in accordance with changes in international reality, is essential to achieving greater efficiency to serve the best interests of the beneficiary countries, as well as those of the United Nations itself.

During the last five years the United Nations has sponsored a series of global conferences to address systematically the key issues facing humanity today. The upcoming World Food Summit, which will take place in Rome from November 13-17 of this year, will close this important cycle. This summit will provide an opportunity to define new strategic objectives for international action in the field of food security in order to overcome structural shortages, especially in the nutrition sector, in many regions of our planet. In preparation, Italy is promoting a joint development initiative for Angola with the three agricultural agencies whose headquarters are in Rome.

The process of economic globalization and the growing interdependence of markets offer enormous economic and social growth possibilities. From this perspective, the concept of global partnership provides for an equitable sharing of responsibilities. The Ministerial Meeting in Singapore is an excellent opportunity to focus on these issues, consolidating the process of trade liberalization sanctioned by the Uruguay Round and strengthening the regulatory role of the World Trade Organization (WTO).

Italy is actively participating in the preparation of the 1997 special session of the United Nations General Assembly dedicated to the environment. While keeping in mind the results of the Rio Conference and foreseeable future scenarios for sustainable development, that session should update the instruments for action and continue to strive for implementation of Agenda 21. In 1996 significant achievements have been made in the field of disarmament. A major step on the road to nuclear disarmament has of course been taken with the signing of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. In the field of conventional weapons, an important agreement was reached in Florence last June on arms control in the former Yugoslavia. Our next goal should be a cut-off in the production of fissile material for military purposes.

The Italian Government pledges to renounce once and for all the production and export of anti-personnel land-mines. We will also initiate the destruction of existing devices and promote further restrictions in the hope that such measures will contribute to reaching a solid international understanding and a definitive ban. To this end, we propose the prompt opening of international negotiations at the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva.

The fundamental role of law in the creation of a new world order must be upheld. National sovereignty has nothing to fear from the consolidation of international law. We believe that the cause of peace can only profit from the establishment of an international criminal court on violations of international humanitarian law and crimes against humanity. Italy is committed to this goal and is ready to host a diplomatic conference in 1998 to sanction the birth of such a court. Italy is also promoting a campaign for a worldwide moratorium on the application of the death penalty.

The European Union has constantly emphasized that financial reform is essential to any modernizing of the United Nations structure, and we share the ideas expressed on this subject by the Irish presidency. We are convinced that financial reform is a prerequisite to the United Nations maintaining its crucial function in international relations. The role that United Nations Member States intend to play in pursuing the objectives of the Charter cannot be independent of their specific responsibility to honour their financial obligations. We firmly reiterate the validity of the specific proposal for financial reform presented by the European Union under Italy's presidency during the first half of this year.

A formidable task awaits us: to adapt our Organization to the needs and the challenges of the twenty-first century. Italy is prepared to spare no effort in the pursuit of our common goals.

The President: I now call on His Royal Highness Prince Mohamed Bolkiah, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Brunei Darussalam.

Prince Mohamed Bolkiah (Brunei Darussalam): It is a very special pleasure for Brunei Darussalam to greet you, Mr. President, as a close friend and neighbour. Please accept our warmest congratulations, both to you and to all Malaysians, on your election. May I also express our appreciation to His Excellency Mr. Freitas do Amaral for his leadership during our fiftieth session.

Our fiftieth anniversary has come and gone. We still remember the many fine statements made last year. Now, however, we have to give them practical substance. In this regard, Mr. President, I was very interested in your recent statements on the role of the General Assembly. I was particularly pleased that you emphasized practical economic and social development.

It was also most encouraging to hear you say that you intend to do all you can for the cause of United Nations reform. Like you, I feel that the General Assembly must not be paralysed by the analysis of reform. We need concrete proposals from our working groups. Then we can spend our time on the hard work of building consensus.

The need is urgent. Tension and conflict within nations are growing. At the same time, the United Nations is increasingly being asked to solve problems in many new areas of international concern — social, economic and sometimes even criminal — that transcend national borders. It is also expected to address the deep-seated causes of future instability, the widening gap between North and South and the allied problems of overpopulation and urbanization, which have been so sharply exposed by this Organization at recent conferences. Above all, it has to face the results of these problems in the form of mounting intolerance, violent aggression and, all too often, extremism and terrorism.

In trying to do all this, its resources are overstretched. For this reason, I would like to thank the Secretary-General, his representatives and all those who are serving this Organization in the field, often in extremely difficult conditions. Their work represents a deep commitment to the cause of peace and stability in the world and I admire and greatly appreciate it. However, I also tend to think that maybe we are asking them to take on new tasks with old or outdated tools. If they are not provided with the means to manage our affairs well, then we in the United Nations are at fault.

In this respect, the tragedy of Bosnia is a warning to us. Certainly, we in Brunei Darussalam welcome recent developments and will continue to give our strong support to the new Government in Bosnia. At the same time, I feel that all of us in this Assembly should recognize the extent to which the events of the last five years reveal our own shortcomings.

We hope that the Security Council will now begin to insist that all agreements be resolutely kept. We would like to see it acting firmly against political pressure from any quarter and ensuring that nothing is allowed to stand in the way of the peoples' recovery.

I say this with particular concern as we are now facing what could become another emblem of failure for us: the current situation in the Middle East. Until quite recently, this was a problem which had defied solution since the earliest days of this Organization. Then, at last, a peace agreement was reached which gave us a realistic glimpse of hope. Even though we realized that it would be a very difficult process, we felt optimistic. However, a new Government in Israel now appears to be challenging the very basis on which our own hopes for peace were founded. The solutions that appeared to be within the grasp of the parties directly concerned are under threat. Rather than becoming more manageable, the scope of the so-called Middle East problem has now extended to include the people of Iraq.

It is consequently with great concern that Brunei Darussalam adds its voice to the many who wish to impress on the leaders of Israel the need to continue the peace process, not just by making statements, but in the full spirit of the agreements reached in Madrid and Oslo.

What I have briefly described represents the sum of economic, social and political problems, which in our view calls for a new approach on our part. This can only be developed, we feel, when the United Nations is reformed. I say this because we are seeing the emergence of a new type of international community, far more diverse than the one our founders knew. At the same time, it is one which is being drawn even closer together through the advance of technology and communications — the "global village" of popular description.

There are many reasons to welcome this. It could mean that we all learn to acknowledge and appreciate our diversity and to take on the best aspects of a real village. However, there is no guarantee. Villages are not always pleasant places to live in. They have their darker side. Modern technology may well encourage neighbourly cooperation, but it is just as capable of enhancing the hostile elements of primitive village life. It could set up a permanent division between the developed and the developing worlds.

That is why I feel it is essential for us to find an effective new approach to the tremendous changes taking place today. As members know, this is what we are trying to develop in South-East Asia. The way we have chosen has enabled us to promote programmes aimed at preventive diplomacy and economic cooperation in our region. It has also meant that we have been able to offer some wider assistance to the cause of South-South cooperation.

These are specific measures with practical aims and they are producing clear results, but they also have a broader and deeper effect. They enable us not only to manage the diversity of our region, but also, at a very human level, to learn to appreciate each others' differences and enjoy the challenge of working together.

By way of example, I would like to commend our friends and colleagues in Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar for their intention to join the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN). They are making a lasting contribution to peace and stability in our region. We are therefore delighted to be on the verge of seeing the whole of South-East Asia working together in cooperation.

What this has led to in terms of strengthening international peace and security is illustrated by our very extensive dialogue process. One practical result of this in our region was the signing of the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty at the last ASEAN summit. This is a Treaty which we would like all nuclear-weapon States to join as a commitment to peace in our region. It was in this spirit that we endorsed the resolution on the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, passed by this Assembly earlier this month, as a first step towards worldwide nuclear disarmament.

What we are trying to stress is the need for inclusion, drawing together all parties to a problem, working towards consensus rather than demanding compromise and bringing everyone into the mainstream of decision-making. The kind of results we hope for were shown just this month in the achievements of the Government of the Philippines and the leaders of the Moro National Liberation Front through the good offices of Indonesia. Their efforts brought to an end more than 20 years of violence and hostility, and I would like to congratulate all the parties involved.

We see this as reflecting the need that lies behind the strong calls that many Member States have made for reform of this Organization. It acknowledges that aggression must be dealt with firmly, but it also recognizes what has been tragically impressed upon us all over the past few years in Europe, Africa and Asia. It is what guides all our work in our region and, I suggest, must be the starting point for any new approach to the conduct of international affairs today. It is the knowledge that, if we do not accept and willingly embrace diversity, there is a price to be paid and it is unacceptable.

The President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, Mr. Hennadi Udovenko.

Mr. Udovenko (Ukraine): It is my honour to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the post of President of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session. On behalf of the Ukrainian delegation, I would also like to express my appreciation to Mr. Freitas do Amaral, who presided so efficiently over the last session and encouraged an intensive exchange of opinions on the role of the United Nations in today's world.

A year ago, at the commemorative session of the General Assembly, our Organization received a substantial credit of trust as a universal international institution which, in the Declaration on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations, was called upon to

> "create new opportunities for peace, development, democracy and cooperation." *(resolution 50/6, third preambular para.)*

Today, we can assert that the United Nations has been and remains the key mechanism for maintaining and strengthening peace and security — and there is much proof of that. There is no doubt that the past year has been extremely important for arms control and disarmament. Tomorrow, 27 September, I will have the honour to sign, on behalf of Ukraine, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), as adopted in historic resolution 50/245. This important instrument calls for the *de jure* affirmation of the end of the nuclear-arms-race era. In signing this Treaty, Ukraine will make yet another contribution to disarmament, the importance of which cannot be overstated.

In this context, I recall another historic event: the final withdrawal of strategic nuclear warheads from the territory of Ukraine. Having eliminated the world's third-largest nuclear arsenal, which we had inherited, Ukraine became a nuclear-weapon-free State on 1 June 1996. In doing so, we believe that Ukraine made an unprecedented contribution, which has not yet received adequate recognition by the international community, to diminishing the global nuclear threat and thereby demonstrated to the whole world its peaceful, consistent and reliable policy. Accordingly, we expect the nuclear States strictly to adhere to their commitments relating to the security assurances given to Ukraine by the United States of America, Russia, the United Kingdom, China and France in December 1994.

Mr. Michaelides (Greece), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Ukraine's important role in the new European security architecture has been recognized recently in several international documents. For us, this means a special responsibility for the maintenance of stability in the whole of Europe. We therefore believe that the process of nuclear disarmament should become more dynamic. In this context, the initiative put forward by the President of Ukraine, Leonid Kuchma, with regard to the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central and Eastern Europe between the Baltic and the Black Seas is the next logical step and an important move in the right direction. I would like to emphasize that the possible deployment of nuclear weapons on the territories of our neighbours in Central and Eastern Europe is a matter of great concern to us. We believe that support for the idea of a non-nuclear Central Europe would promote an atmosphere of confidence between and among the States of the region and prevent the emergence of new dividing lines on the European continent. By adding to the existing zones in Antarctica, the South Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as the nuclear-weapon-free zones in South-East Asia and Africa, the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central and Eastern Europe would create the "critical mass" that would foster the process of global nuclear disarmament.

In our opinion, the Conference on Disarmament, which includes Ukraine as a new, full-fledged member, should immediately start developing a programme of complete nuclear disarmament with a view to bringing closer the realization of Ukraine's appeal for a twenty-first century without nuclear weapons.

Among other important international achievements of the past year, I would like to refer to the beginning of the peace settlement in the former Yugoslavia. It is important to remember that the peace-keeping efforts of the United Nations were not in vain. Risking their lives in difficult conditions, the Blue Helmets have fulfilled their mission and prevented the spillover of the conflict. In this context, I would like to draw the attention of the Assembly to the necessity of the speedy entry into force and implementation of the 1994 Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel.

We hope that the peace process initiated in Dayton has become irreversible. The proof of this will be in the successful implementation of the military aspects of the Peace Agreement by the Implementation Force (IFOR) and of the recent elections held in Bosnia under the auspices of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

In general, we think that recent international efforts in the former Yugoslavia have been a success not only for a peace settlement. In my opinion, we have also witnessed the appearance of a potential machinery for effective cooperation between various international structures in crisis management. I refer in particular to an important experience of the Implementation Force (IFOR) operation carried out, under the mandate of the Security Council, by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), its partners — including Ukraine — and other countries. At the same time, the ultimate success of the peace process will be impossible without the active and action-oriented involvement of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in the implementation of civil aspects of the Agreement. The concerted efforts by the United Nations, NATO and the OSCE to settle one of the most tragic conflicts of our time prove that political will and a clear division of functions between the respective structures make it possible to transform the idea of mutually reinforcing institutions into reality. In the meantime, the international community may have acquired a reliable mechanism for the solution of its acute problems.

I believe that the experience of the peace settlement in the former Yugoslavia could serve as a shining example for the common elaboration of a future global security architecture by all Members of this world Organization. This architecture should also contain a comprehensive concept of peace-keeping, the elaboration of which, within the framework of the General Assembly, has to be accelerated. An essential element in this work could be the eventual reorientation of peace-keeping towards preventive diplomacy.

However, it is obvious that we will not be able to build up a new global security architecture without radical reform of the United Nations itself. The need for United Nations reform was emphasized by virtually all participants at the last session of the General Assembly. This issue is also a matter of discussion at the current session. Yet real changes can be achieved only on the condition of a substantial revision of the existing financial system of the United Nations.

In recent years the United Nations has been experiencing an unprecedented financial crisis which poses a real threat to its very functioning. Experience shows that financial crises are the result either of a wrong taxation policy or of unsound spending. We think that in the case of the United Nations both factors are involved. The inability of a number of Member States to meet their financial obligations is a direct consequence of the overassessment of their contribution rates. It will be impossible for the United Nations to avert financial crisis unless existing irregularities in the scale of apportionment of its expenses are eliminated. And we expect that the current session will find a proper solution to this problem.

Against its will, Ukraine has been made one of the United Nations debtors. This has occurred due to the fact that the decision on the relocation of my country to group (c) in the scale for the financing of peace-keeping operations has been delayed for several years. The accumulation of a substantial debt is a direct result of the General Assembly's unfair decision 47/456, whose sponsors were perfectly well aware that the decision would lead to the current financial crisis. They refused to increase the contribution of those nations which could afford to pay and, contrary to the rules, placed larger assessments on the shoulders of the countries which were unable to pay such amounts.

Ukraine has always been aware of the need to provide the United Nations with adequate financial resources. Upon the instructions of my Government, I would like to inform members that Ukraine will start paying off its debt to the United Nations. As early as this year, the amount will be reduced by $20 million. In coming years, its real payments to the Organization's budget will be increased.

The reform of the Security Council should become another important component of transformation within the United Nations. We support the desire of Germany and Japan to acquire the status of permanent members of the Security Council, but at the same time stand for increasing the number of non-permanent members on the basis of equitable geographical representation, which would also take into account the interests of the Eastern European regional group. I hope that the "two plus eight" formula which was proposed by Ukraine and which, in principle, coincides with the Italian approach and that of other countries, will be conducive to the achievement of a mutually acceptable solution to the problem within the framework of the relevant Working Group of the General Assembly.

One of the essential features of general peace and security in the next millennium should be qualitatively new international economic cooperation, the globalization of production and trade, the development of science and technology and the broadening of the flows of finances and services.

We believe that the attention of the world community should focus today on more than the political and military aspects of security. It must also encompass the economic, social and ecological dimensions of peace and sustainable development. For Ukraine, this is not just an abstract idea without a fixed deadline for its implementation. Chernobyl turned the ecological dimension of our national security into a priority of Ukrainian domestic and foreign policy.

Ten years have passed since that catastrophe, but we are still experiencing its grave consequences. Chernobyl has not disappeared into the past. If humankind continues to ignore common sense and to think only about today, Chernobyl may be a reflection of our future.

We are encouraged by the Secretary-General's report on the work of the Organization (A/51/1) stating that the United Nations remains deeply concerned by the consequences of Chernobyl and is committed to pursuing measures aimed at their alleviation. We hope that the international community will continue to create conditions, including material and financial ones, which would allow Ukraine to meet its obligation and to decommission the Chernobyl nuclear power plant by the year 2000.

We should also remember that durable peace and sustainable development on a global scale cannot be achieved unless all countries secure adequate living standards for their populations and overcome unemployment, poverty, social disintegration and environmental pollution.

In this context, I would like to draw attention to the initiative concerning the creation of the Council on Economic Security put forward by the President of

Ukraine at the Special Commemorative Meeting of the General Assembly last year. In our view, it is high time to concentrate the efforts of United Nations Member States on the formation of a legal basis which would allow us to implement this important initiative as one of the steps towards increasing the level of international economic security, securing the global coordination of the activities of international, regional and national economic institutions and preventing economic coercion and discrimination.

The issues of international terrorism, organized crime, illicit trafficking of drugs and money laundering have become matters of special concern. Ukraine has always played an active role in international efforts, particularly within the framework of the United Nations, aimed at eliminating these scourges of the present, which not only threaten the security and the health of people but have a negative impact on the social, economic and political situation in many countries. We believe that special attention should be paid to the elaboration of specific actions to be taken against transnational organized crime. In this context, Poland's initiative to place on the agenda of the current session the question of the possible elaboration of a convention on those issues is more than timely and should be supported. Ukraine is ready to participate in the drafting of this legal instrument.

In view of the present financial situation of the Organization, the search for new ways to revitalize international cooperation in the field of development has acquired new significance. One of the promising trends, primarily in finding additional sources of financing, is the promotion of regular dialogue between the United Nations and the financial institution of the Bretton Woods system.

We are convinced that larger resources allocated by these institutions for development would speed up social and economic transformations both in economies in transition and in developing countries. They would also create conditions for the successful reform of the global system of international economic relations. It is quite obvious that the integration of those countries into the world economic system would benefit the entire global community. We believe that this very philosophy should become a foundation for a new strategy of global economic development. The United Nations is called upon to play a decisive role in its elaboration.

In this context, we welcome the gradual deepening of understanding among Member States of the problems faced by the countries with economies in transition, as is shown by the increased resources allocated by the United Nations Development Programme for its operational activities in the countries of Eastern Europe, including Ukraine. For its part, Ukraine is considering becoming a full member of the multilateral General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade/World Trade Organization system as an integral part of its own economic reform.

The successes of the United Nations depend upon the stable development of each Member State. Steadily overcoming the obstacles that befell our State in the process of radically transforming its society, Ukraine has recently marked the fifth anniversary of its independence. From this rostrum I would like to reaffirm that the choice of the Ukrainian people in favour of independent democratic development is final and irreversible.

The adoption on 28 June of this year of the Constitution of Ukraine has become an event of historic importance for the Ukrainian people. As President Leonid Kuchma emphasized,

> "It is an event of a great significance belonging to those few historical dates which unite people not by the iron fist but by the imperatives of the heart, and which turn a population into a nation and a territory into a State."

In adopting its fundamental law, Ukraine has chosen its own model of State-building and for reformatting its public life. In drafting the law, Ukrainian legislators benefited not only from previous historical experiences — such as that provided by Pylyp Orlyk, a famous seventeenth-century Ukrainian public figure who wrote one of the first European democratic constitutions — but also drew upon the modern experience, in particular that of the members of the Council of Europe.

We in Ukraine are consistently building a sovereign, independent, democratic and socially-oriented State which promotes human rights as the highest social value. Under extremely difficult circumstances, we have managed to follow the European model of public life.

I would like to emphasize that integration into European and Euro-Atlantic structures is a strategic goal of Ukraine. At the same time my country is still committed to non-bloc status. Having yesterday become an observer in the Non-Aligned Movement, Ukraine once again proved this.

No less important for us remain relations with the newly independent States of the former Soviet Union, notably with the Russian Federation, to which we are linked by common historical experiences.

Transformations initiated by the market reform of the economy are becoming increasingly perceptible in Ukraine. The recent introduction of a new currency, the hryvnya, proves conclusively that the radical economic changes in Ukraine have become irreversible. The first results of monetary reform show that in addition to a positive impact on business activities, it has had a stabilizing psychological effect on the Ukrainian people.

Our society is in the process of formation. We realize that ours is a long and difficult path. There are a number of important objectives we have to achieve. This will require the gradual revival of democratic standards and their introduction into the fabric of Ukrainian society, which has been scarred by the totalitarian policies of the last decades.

While advancing along this road, Ukraine will continue to count on the support of the international community. At the same time, I would like to reaffirm that Ukraine will continue to be committed to supporting the United Nations which, like my own country, is experiencing a difficult but vital time of transformation. This is the imperative of our times, and we have to meet this challenge.

The Acting President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Paraguay, His Excellency Mr. Rubén Darío Melgarejo Lanzoni.

Mr. Melgarejo Lanzoni (Paraguay) (*interpretation from Spanish*): It is an honour for me, on behalf of Paraguay, its people and its Government, to wish the President of the General Assembly, Ambassador Razali Ismail, every success in his endeavours. We wish also to emphasize the excellent work accomplished by President Diogo Freitas do Amaral, who tirelessly led the proceedings of the past session.

For Paraguay, the United Nations is a form that has guaranteed the free debate of ideas and the participation of all without discrimination or exclusion. For a long time, the United Nations has been the mandatory beacon of our nations when their essential rights were threatened. For Paraguayans, the fundamental rights of men and women, one of the pillars of the United Nations, are today vital — and not just rhetoric — in the search for world peace, freedom and security, which only democratic civilian Governments can guarantee.

The new historical reality we face — knowing immediately what happens elsewhere in the world and within or countries — means that we all must share a greater responsibility and solidarity. The globalization of today's world is such that a problem besetting one nation is not an isolated matter, but rather one that must be considered by all.

This is why we will have to rethink the age-old question of what path all men and women should take. While we belong to diverse ideologies and cultures, we must nevertheless secure equality, rights and freedoms.

Our contributions and suggestions for strengthening the Organization and adapting it to the new realities of today's world therefore are made in the spirit of cooperation. This is why we request that the reforms to be adopted in the framework of the United Nations be aimed at reducing its fragmentation in order to make it a more functionally integrated structure. Such reform will make possible more fluid communication and much more efficient coordination. This is why we insist on reform to eliminate unnecessary costs through the consolidation of the programmes aimed at the harmonious development of our peoples, and to rationalize and optimize existing resources in order to avoid the duplication of human or economic efforts.

The Government of Paraguay, aware of its international commitments, has made enormous efforts to fulfil its financial obligations to the United Nations. In this regard, we send out an appeal for payments of assessed contributions to be made within established deadlines in order to ensure the operation of the Organization. The principle of equity so requires this.

We must also state that Paraguay's position on the reform of the United Nations is clear with respect to the General Assembly. We consider this body not only a model of democratic decision-making, but also — given its high degree of universality and free exchange of ideas — the most important organ of the system. We support the expansion of the Security Council, which requires a larger number of permanent and non-permanent members on the basis of equitable geographic distribution. In this connection, we support the view that Latin America should be represented among the permanent members, in addition to countries such as Germany and Japan. Paraguay maintains that the exercise of the veto should evolve towards innovative mechanisms that would be used more objectively.

Programmes that make sustainable economic development possible constitute another aspect the system must take into account. Our country is promoting a social market economy, free and respectful of private initiative, but without disregarding the share of responsibility borne by the Government. We therefore view with satisfaction the leading role of the United Nations in the field of sustainable human development. In this connection, we wish to underscore the binding conventions on the environment, the commitment made by 118 Heads of State and Government to put an end to poverty, unemployment and social marginalization, the important results achieved at Habitat II and the Midrand Declaration of the ninth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.

We particularly endorse paragraph 17 of that Declaration, which states that

> "The lack of territorial access to the sea, aggravated by remoteness and isolation from world markets, imposes serious constraints on the overall socio-economic development efforts of the land-locked developing countries." (*TD/377, para. 17*)

As such, those countries require sufficient international cooperation to maintain and improve their transportation and commercial-exchange infrastructure.

Having signed the aforementioned conventions and having participated in the aforementioned conference, the Paraguayan national Government adopted concrete measures to implement the provisions of the plans of action that emerged from those meetings. Thus, following the mandate of the World Summit for Social Development, a secretariat for social action was established at the ministerial level, reporting to the presidency of the Republic. Its fundamental purpose will be to prepare public policy on social projects and to coordinate the actions of the Government and civil society in order to improve our people's standard of living.

We have also prepared a strategic plan to improve education, in conjunction with the educational reform currently being implemented by the national Government. We have also devised a map of basic needs — which is also known as poverty mapping. We have carried out a household survey covering not only urban, but also rural areas. We are at the moment preparing a system of social indicators and social expenditures.

Furthermore, a year after the holding of the Fourth World Conference on Women, the public and private sectors at large have been made keenly aware of its Platform for Action, thus fortifying policies relating to gender.

I wish to express my Government's deep gratitude to the United Nations system, and particularly to its Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, who has constantly and tirelessly helped us work towards the well-being of the people of Paraguay.

We are aware that our age is marked by unusual characteristics. Contemporary history defines us differently. Concepts have changed. Today we speak more positively and effectively about integration, cooperation and complementarity. The time of sterile confrontation is behind us. This is a time of solidarity and of reciprocal and diverse cooperation; constructive and creative interdependence is the key to our daily coexistence.

Today's world needs not only a new economic order, but also a new international cultural order. Science, knowledge and technology must be our universal heritage. An awareness of solidarity is the way for which human beings to understand themselves and others. We should see that without this understanding of others we are insufficient, incomplete and lacking in humanity. Genuine comprehensive development requires the cooperation of all the men and women who inhabit this world. Only in that way will development as a human right, with the blessing of the Organization and with our strong support, find its full meaning and its place in history. Either we remedy our circumstances or we sink in them.

However, the disappearance of the rivalries of a bipolar world has, unfortunately, not meant the end of conflict. Throughout this year, we have seen ethnic and nationalistic confrontations that have given rise to overwhelming human crises that have cut down innocent lives, destroyed property and — still more seriously — brought about the loss of the value of coexistence. In this state of affairs, Paraguay hopes that the military confrontations that spill the blood of nations and violate the right to live will very soon come to an end. We encourage the consolidation of the peace process in the former Yugoslavia and the resumption of the peace process in the Middle East in order to find a just and lasting solution in that region.

Our country also hopes that efforts will continue towards the resolution of conflicts in Rwanda and Burundi in order to bring about peace and stability in the Great Lakes region. Paraguay views with satisfaction the achievements made in Angola, and we hope that the Organization of African Unity will continue to play an important role in the prevention and settlement of conflicts in Africa.

Paraguay notes with great satisfaction the results achieved by the United Nations through its peace-keeping Missions in Haiti, its observers in Nicaragua and El Salvador and its verification Mission in Guatemala, which has achieved major success recently. Paraguay is in favour of continuing increasingly to promote the mechanisms of preventive diplomacy and, above all, of peace-keeping. Similarly, the Republic of Paraguay welcomes the spirit of reconciliation manifested by the Government of the Republic of China. We hope that a dialogue will be established to resolve the situation with the People's Republic of China.

Now more than ever before, stability and peace are the challenge. It is imperative to build a multipolar world to guarantee the equitable development of nations and peoples. Equity should be the cornerstone of universal harmony. In this spirit, we trust that our Organization's actions for disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons will prove effective and will strengthen our battle against all threats to peace and world security. Faithful to this purpose, Paraguay co-sponsored the resolution on the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which was adopted by the General Assembly last 10 September. We encourage all Member States of this great Organization to sign the Treaty, as I did a few days ago as Minister for Foreign Affairs of Paraguay. We urge that the Treaty be promptly ratified so that it may enter into force.

Almost 50 years ago, on 10 December 1948, the General Assembly adopted and proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Thus did mankind achieve one of its most precious goals: a Declaration of rights for which peoples and nations, individuals and societies, had always fought. In Paraguay today, we firmly believe that we have learned the hard lesson of living in peace, democracy and pluralism. The era of oppression and of a lack of basic freedoms, economic backwardness and cultural isolation is past. It is part of a sad history that we will remember only so as not to repeat it. The democracy we are building today, with the active participation of our citizens and the solidarity of the international community, is part of an irreversible process.

Of course, barely four months ago, a small group, nostalgic for authoritarianism, tried to turn back the clock. But thanks to the prompt support of friendly nations and to the spontaneous and courageous action of young people who took to the streets to defend the democratic process, we were able to abort a military adventure that could have caused irreparable damage to our country. Fortunately, our country is today moving straight towards a strengthening of all its freedoms and towards democratic stability in its political system.

We are greatly pleased that Paraguay was able to overcome its institutional crisis with the weapons of democracy. The threat of force against our institutions was combated with our democratic beliefs. The Government averted the danger without resorting to any measures in violation of the Constitution or our laws. Even at the most difficult times, we maintained freedom of the press. No citizen was imprisoned and no emergency laws were decreed. Our victory was based on our belief in political pluralism and the right of dissent. Thus, the calm and decisive action of the President of the Republic of Paraguay, Juan Carlos Wasmosy, restored the autonomy of civilian rule. We stopped being a democracy under the protection of military power and became a civilian democracy, free from interference or pressure from outside forces.

Having made this historic, political step, the Government and the people of Paraguay are deeply grateful to the Member States of this Organization for their support during that delicate crisis. In particular, we are grateful to the Security Council for its clear and unflinching support of Paraguayan democracy. This support further strengthened our faith in the United Nations efforts to maintain democratic political institutions, freedom, peace and international security.

Paraguay's foreign policy is based primarily on regional economic integration, at the centre of which is the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR). We are convinced that the Latin American integration process is the key to our country's integration into the world economy and to the consolidation of our democracy. Following this policy, we have undertaken many activities with a view to expanding the links between our internal market and international economic processes.

Another important element has been the frontal attack on international organized crime. The task is not easy. For years political and economic corruption were the *modus operandi* of the dictatorship. None the less, the

Government of Paraguay is committed to fighting the scourge of drug trafficking and money-laundering. We encourage the public, national and foreign alike, to report irregularities worthy of investigation, inspection or review so as to eliminate the sources of corruption. With its new attitude of political transparency, the Government has sent a draft bill to the National Congress which defines and aims to suppress the crime of money-laundering, including the laundering of profits from the illicit sale of narcotics, psychotropic substances and dangerous drugs. A national drug-control plan is also being drawn up.

Fifty years after the establishment of the International Court of Justice in The Hague, my country — fulfilling the promise President Wasmosy made last year to the General Assembly — yesterday deposited with the Secretary-General of the United Nations the instruments of acceptance of the jurisdiction of the Court. This decision is one further commitment on my country's part to the universal society in which we believe. As Minister for Foreign Affairs of my nation, I will always remember having been the vessel of this historic decision. We also reiterate, as a land-locked country, the importance of the Convention and the reforms to the Convention on the Law of the Sea. We express our faith in the principle of the universal heritage of mankind through our presence as a member of the council of the International Seabed Authority.

Here at the beginning of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, as Minister for Foreign Affairs I would like to take the liberty of making a declaration of faith. Too young to have known the founding, the first achievements, the main crises, the changes and the development of the institutions of the United Nations, I belong to a generation destined to play a role in the twenty-first century.

When I was born, the human rights covenants had already been written, the environment was already a concern for all peoples, and the universal diplomatic conventions and legal system of treaties were already in place. Such is our world at the end of the century. Thus, in supporting reform, Paraguay believes that it is necessary to mention through me that there is one thing that we will not be able to change: our purposes and goals, which we must preserve for future generations.

We will reaffirm time and time again the equality of nations, large and small, and the importance of creating conditions for the rule of international law. Here in the General Assembly, the soul of the United Nations, representing a young nation which has yet enjoyed 200 years of independence and speaking before age-old peoples and cultures, I reaffirm mankind's utopia: a common belief renewed that we can affirm this forever to be our home.

The Acting President: I call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Zimbabwe, His Excellency Mr. Stanislaus Mudenge.

Mr. Mudenge (Zimbabwe): I congratulate Mr. Razali on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session. We are more than convinced that his vast experience and diplomatic skills will prove to be vital assets at this session of the Assembly. I assure him that my delegation will cooperate fully with him in the fulfilment of his onerous responsibilities.

Furthermore, I would like to pay tribute to his predecessor, Professor Diogo Freitas do Amaral, who steered the work of the Assembly through its historic fiftieth anniversary in a commendable and honourable way.

Our tribute also goes to the Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali for his distinguished leadership of our Organization during the past year. We are especially grateful to him for his tireless efforts to enhance the Organization's role in maintaining international peace and security as well as in promoting international economic development and cooperation.

At the last session of the General Assembly, when we celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, we witnessed the largest-ever gathering of Heads of State and Government. On that occasion, the world leaders made a historic reaffirmation of our commitment to the purposes and principles of this Organization as enshrined in the Charter. Besides taking stock of the progress made and the lessons learnt during the past 50 years, the world leaders endeavoured not only to recapture the vision of the founding fathers of the United Nations, but also to chart the institutional framework and operational parameters that could enhance the Organization's relevance and effectiveness in a changed international landscape. My delegation sincerely hopes that we will all be able to take full advantage of this renewed commitment to the Organization to ensure that the United Nations system as a whole is reformed, revitalized and rendered more efficacious, transparent, accountable and democratic.

The United Nations, as the universally accepted matrix of multilateralism, must, in the post-cold-war era, play a vastly expanded role in the domain of peace-keeping and make a positive contribution to the new phenomenon of globalization and its increased levels of economic and social interdependence, as well as the technologically fuelled transnational linkages among the countries of the world. The Organization therefore faces an inescapable imperative for reform and revitalization.

In this regard, my delegation is deeply perturbed by the slow progress made by the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council. We in Africa maintain that the present arrangement, in which Africa and Latin America have no permanent representatives on the Security Council, while Asia has only one, is unjust and antidemocratic and must not be allowed to continue. Those three regions should each have at least two permanent seats, with incumbents enjoying the same rights and privileges as the present permanent members. Additional non-permanent seats should also be allocated to each of those regions so as to ensure equitable geographical representation proportionate to the numerical strength of each region in this Organization.

In other areas of reform, our primary objective should be to reaffirm the role of the General Assembly as the highest decision-making body in the entire United Nations system. Any process of restructuring, revitalization or strengthening should necessarily redress the erosion of the principle of the accountability of all principal and subsidiary organs and specialized agencies of the United Nations to the General Assembly. My delegation will therefore seek resolutely to uphold the authority of the General Assembly as enshrined in the Charter and, consequently, will oppose any proposals or recommendations that might lead to the usurpation of the authority of the General Assembly under any guise or form. Accordingly, we will not agree to authorizing the Secretariat to amend, postpone or cancel any official programme activities without the express approval of the General Assembly, whose prerogative it is to give, change or withdraw the mandates of such programme activities.

My delegation is of the strong view that reform should not necessarily be equated with the downsizing of the United Nations system. We also feel that an optimally streamlined and strengthened United Nations system will not necessarily be responsive to the needs of its membership as long as it is subjected to chronic cash-flow problems. The appalling record of some Member States that dishonour their financial obligations to the United Nations and our endless lamentations over the resultant financial crises have clearly brought into question the credibility of the Organization and the commitment of its membership. In our view, the time is long past for us to re-examine all the efforts that we have been exerting in an endeavour to identify and agree on the formulation and mechanisms to deal with the current financial crisis that has beset the Organization. Unless Member States take serious steps to clear their arrears and improve their payment pattern by remitting their assessed contributions promptly, in full and without conditions, the United Nations will continue to dither on the brink of bankruptcy and its efficacy will be totally compromised. It is imperative that we, the Member States, create a capacity for the Organization to fulfil the mandate we have given to it.

The United Nations' role in maintaining international peace and security must of necessity have a global thrust in both the geographical sense and the conceptual framework. Peace-threatening conflicts in any part of our global village should never be seen to attract differential attention depending upon their geographical location, strategic interest, ethnic complexion or such other narrow considerations of the big Powers.

The much-belated intervention and subsequent failure of the United Nations in Somalia and its half-hearted interventions in Rwanda, Burundi and Liberia have exposed the Organization to harmful criticism, which has led to a further decline in its credibility. United Nations peacekeeping efforts in Africa have generally met with mixed fortunes. We have yet to see the Namibian and Mozambican success stories repeat themselves in several other trouble spots on the continent.

Although the peace process in Angola continues to run behind schedule, we are persuaded that the seeds of lasting peace have been sown in that country. We need to redouble our efforts in urging the Angolans to persevere along the present bumpy road of peace on the basis of national reconciliation and unity.

Although the humanitarian situation in Somalia has improved somewhat since the intervention of the United Nations, that country remains in political turmoil from which it cannot rescue itself fully without the sustained involvement of the international community. We therefore call upon the international community, through the United Nations, to review its current minimalist approach to Somalia, explore new possibilities for constructive engagement and give peace another chance.

In Burundi, the fundamental challenge of having democracy with security has now been compounded by the need to stop generalized violence and to return the country to constitutionality. The United Nations should support the sterling efforts of Burundi's neighbours to assist that country to achieve peace and stability. The tragedy of genocide in Rwanda must not be allowed to repeat itself in Burundi. No!

In Liberia, brute force and violence must not be allowed to triumph. The parties should be made to honour the peace agreement already reached through the good offices of the Economic Community of West African States. The people of Liberia have suffered enough. The United Nations must send a clear message to the warlords in that country that our common humanity may soon impel us to try them for war crimes and crimes against humanity.

With regard to the stalled peace process in Western Sahara, it is imperative that the international community, through the United Nations, honour the spirit and letter of the commitment it made to the disenfranchised people of that territory and ensure that a free and fair United Nations-supervised referendum takes place there on the basis of the United Nations Settlement Plan for Western Sahara.

In the Middle East, we appeal to the new Government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization to continue on the path of peace and reason, as espoused by the late Prime Minister of Israel, Mr. Yitzhak Rabin, who paid with his life that the two peoples might live together in peace and harmony. Renewing the construction of settlements on Palestinian land is no contribution to peace. It undermines the peace process. There is no alternative to peace. We therefore urge the parties to remain committed to the peace process until Palestinian self-determination and a Palestinian State become realities. It is only in this context that the security of Israel can be guaranteed.

Commitment to peace has remained the centrepiece of the Non-Aligned Movement. Thirty-five years ago, the founding fathers of this Movement had a vision of a world, *inter alia*, living in peace and harmony, free of nuclear threat and super-Power rivalry. Two days ago, we had occasion to commemorate that vision. We found it to be as relevant and powerful today as when it was first articulated 35 years ago. We recommitted ourselves, among other things, to pursuing the goal of a world at peace, free from the threat of weapons of mass destruction. We reaffirmed that complete nuclear disarmament is a *sine qua non* for the survival of humanity on our planet. We therefore appeal to all nuclear Powers to agree to ban the production, testing and use or threat of use of nuclear weapons and other weapons of Armageddon.

To enhance this Organization's accountability and credibility, the decision-making process with regard to United Nations peace-keeping mandates must cater to an increased role for the general membership of the Organization, starting with troop-contributing countries. Furthermore, efforts such as those which entail preventive diplomacy and post-conflict peace-building, as spelled out in the Secretary-General's report, "Supplement to an Agenda for Peace", clearly fall within the domain of the General Assembly. Moreover, it is our view that the United Nations is the only Organization which is uniquely charged with a global mandate to maintain international peace and security. This means therefore that regional peace-keeping efforts can only complement and not substitute the leading role of the United Nations.

The United Nations should also enhance its role in promoting international cooperation in other spheres of its competence, particularly that of trade. Only a few months ago, the international community celebrated the successful launching of the World Trade Organization, following protracted multilateral trade negotiations. For this new multilateral trade regime to work, it is imperative that member States resist the temptation to initiate practices or policies that seek to compromise the sovereignty of other member States or to reintroduce colonialism in another guise. Developed countries should live up to their commitments and abandon protectionist policies if all countries are to benefit from the new trading arrangements. Improved market access and increased foreign direct investment must be accompanied by new and innovative ways to tackle the debt burden of developing countries, with a view to finding a comprehensive and once-and-for-all solution to the debt problem.

Given the negative economic trends in some of our countries, the developed countries and international financial institutions should seriously consider debt-forgiveness for low-income developing countries. Such a course of action would stop the flight of much-needed resources from these countries and create new possibilities for real savings for investment and growth. I wish to affirm that we, the developing countries, fully accept and recognize that we bear the primary responsibility for our own development; we have accordingly undertaken various economic structural adjustment reforms, often at enormous social and political cost. These ambitious and painful reforms could flounder if developed countries fail to complement these sterling efforts by taking decisive measures to reduce the stock of our debt and by removing the wall of protectionist barriers. We also call on the developed countries to take decisive measures, as a matter or urgency, to increase the flow of official development assistance, private investment and the transfer of technologies to developing nations.

In a few days, world leaders will assemble in Rome for yet another world summit. This time, the international community will focus its attention on the important question of food security and the good health of the people of the world. Unfortunately, even the increased food supplies in the world are inaccessible to more than 1.5 billion hungry people who are acknowledged to be living in abject poverty. We cannot accept that the legacy of hungry and malnourished people is what our generation will bequeath to the twenty-first century.

We expect development to bring food to our dining tables, clean water into our homes, better housing, improved health and security to all our children. The present trend towards globalization and the deepening interdependence among economies should foster a universal feeling and sense of belonging to the global village whose concept we have now come to take for granted, but whose benefits accrue to only a few countries.

Only last week, this Assembly carried out a review of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s. In the statements made by representatives of African countries, it was made abundantly clear that the international commitments made in 1991, like those made at the launching of United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development 1986-1990 earlier, had not been fulfilled. We therefore call on the international community, and our development partners in particular, to mobilize the requisite financial resources to augment our efforts and give fresh impetus to the realization of the goals set out in United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s.

When the founding fathers of the United Nations outlined the purposes and principles of this Organization, they envisioned a United Nations that would

> "be a centre for harmonizing the actions of nations in the attainment of these common ends."

As we seek to enhance the relevance of this Organization to the world today, it is imperative that we understand that the vast majority of the people of this world expect the United Nations to be a principal actor for progress and change, and to be equipped to play an effective and leading role in improving the economic and social situation of the world's citizens. As we commemorate the International Year for the Eradication of Poverty, we are alarmed at the growing extent of abject poverty, which now engulfs 20 per cent of the world's population. That poverty is the root cause of most of the world's social ills, including strife and peace-threatening conflicts, cannot be overemphasized. We appeal to Governments the world over to respond in earnest to the clarion call of the Copenhagen world social summit and to spare no effort at both the national and international levels, to roll back the advancing scourge of poverty.

It is needless to stress that the elimination of poverty and the attainment of the broader goal of sustainable development will remain impossible to achieve unless nations show renewed political resolve to implement policies aimed at enabling humankind to better manage and live with its environment, as agreed to at the Rio de Janeiro summit and at subsequent Conferences. The ever-dwindling natural resource base, global warming, persistent droughts and desertification are eloquent reminders that humankind's current destructive processes of growth are pushing our planet towards the precipice. Under these circumstances, the search for safer, environmentally sound and sustainable approaches to development, including the utilization of new and renewable resources, has become more urgent now than ever before.

Only last week, leaders from 103 countries, from all regions of the world, heeding this historic challenge of our time, gathered in Harare, Zimbabwe, for the first-ever World Solar Summit to map out strategies aimed at promoting the development and utilization of solar and other forms of renewable energy. In recognition of the important role that solar energy can play in the advancement of socio-economic development and in reducing environmental degradation, the Summit adopted a comprehensive World Solar Programme 1996-2005 with a view to creating effective mechanisms to speed up and facilitate the use of solar energy. We call upon the United Nations Secretary-General, the specialized agencies of the United Nations, non-governmental organizations and the international community at large to lend the necessary financial and other forms of support to the Programme to enable it to succeed.

In June 1997 another conference of equal environmental significance, the International Convention on Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), will convene in Harare. The challenges facing this conference will by no means be small. Global conservation strategies and policies have to be implemented in the national interest and within the means available for the benefit of each country. We in southern Africa have adopted effective conservation policies over the years that have seen the growth of our elephant herd beyond the levels our ecosystem can support. It would be unfortunate, and indeed an irony of our times, if we, who have conceived and successfully implemented innovative wildlife conservation policies, should find ourselves being penalized for our success and the failure of others. The international community has an obligation to adopt new, dynamic and flexible policies that would enable countries such as South Africa, Namibia, Botswana and my own country to reap the benefits of their wildlife conservation successes. To act otherwise would be counter-productive and an injustice to the noble cause of wildlife conservation as a whole. My country intends to make constructive suggestions on this subject at the CITES meeting next year.

To remain relevant and effective, the United Nations must stay at the centre stage of global activities. Its worldwide responsibilities cannot be delegated; nor can its Charter-enshrined priorities be subordinated to issues extraneous to its purposes and principles. We are taken aback by the efforts of those who seek to prescribe to the United Nations a reform exercise that would force the Organization to diminish and to reorient its Charter-enshrined role in promoting development to the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization and the blind forces of the market. The Charter envisaged an identifiable role for the United Nations in promoting development, which is a prerequisite for, and the ultimate corollary of, peace.

My delegation maintains that the United Nations is uniquely placed to play a policy-making and resource identification role. Its decisions must necessarily set the pace and direction for other institutions such as the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization.

In conclusion, the strength of the United Nations lies in its universality and its impartiality in implementing its mandate to promote peace and security, economic and social development, human rights and international law as outlined in its Charter.

Whereas the Organization has clearly played a significant role in the containment and settlement of disputes through peace-keeping activities, and in the expansion and codification of international law, it has largely failed to have any significant impact on the development process in developing countries. The few developing countries that have managed to score any breakthroughs have done so in spite of the United Nations. As the General Assembly outlines its medium-term plan for the period 1998-2003, my delegation, together with others, will seek to ensure that the development process, particularly Africa's economic recovery and development, is underwritten by the Organization's irrevocable commitment.

Finally, let me turn to the agenda item dealing with the election of the Secretary-General of this Organization. Since it is an item on the agenda of this Assembly, it is imperative that Member States freely express their views on this matter. We of Africa have a clear and unambiguous position. We believe that it is Africa's turn to provide a Secretary-General. We have had one term so far and, following the normal practice, are entitled to a second term. The African leaders, meeting in Yaoundé, Cameroon, this year, endorsed the candidature of the incumbent, His Excellency Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali. We stand ready to engage all Members of this Organization in the process of finalizing consultations on this subject.

The Acting President: I now call on the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, His Excellency Mr. Choi Su Hon.

Mr. Choi Su Hon (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) (*spoke in Korean; English text furnished by the delegation*): I should like first of all, on behalf of the delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, to congratulate Mr. Razali Ismail on his election as President. We are pleased that Malaysia, an Asian country, has assumed the presidency of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly. We believe that the rich experience he has gained in the course of dealing with international issues will crown the current session with good results.

I should also like to express my gratitude to Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral of Portugal, the former

President, for his great contribution to the success of the previous session of the General Assembly. My appreciation also goes to the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, for his efforts devoted to strengthening the United Nations.

The building of a new world free from all forms of domination and subjugation, and aggression and war has long been the common and cherished aspiration of the world's peoples. However, domination and subjugation, and subordination and inequality still predominate in international relations — even today, after the end of the cold war — and this constitutes a great challenge to the realization of world peace and security and the democratization of international society.

Recent developments in the international arena are eloquent proof of the fact that every country should firmly maintain its independence in order to safeguard its national dignity and rights and to build a free and prosperous world.

For the Korean people, the last half-century has been a period of struggle and progress in their efforts to consolidate and develop our style of socialism and to reunify the divided country despite all kinds of challenges and difficulties.

Though caught in the vortex of the complex and fluctuating international situation surrounding the Korean peninsula, the Korean people have been able to march forward continuously along the road to socialism — which they themselves chose — without any vacillation, disappointment or vicissitude, despite the fact that on an untrodden and poorly paved path, every step is difficult. This has been possible because they have firmly maintained independence in all domains of state-building on the basis of the *Juche* idea, the political philosophy of the Korean people.

The *Juche* idea, based on the philosophical principle that man is the master of everything and decides everything, regards the popular masses as the driving force of the socio-historical movement, and identifies the people's struggle for independence, sovereignty and development as the way to realize their independence. We have carried out our independent policy on the basis of the *Juche* idea, relying on the strength of our own people. In international relations, we have firmly adhered to the principle of not infringing upon the sovereignty of others and of not having our own sovereignty violated.

At a time when international relations and the situation are becoming increasingly complicated, it becomes ever more important for a small country like ours firmly to maintain an independent stand. The *Juche* philosophy, created by the fatherly leader Comrade Kim Il Sung, the founding father of our socialist Korea, and our independent policy, based on this philosophy, have been credibly followed by the great leader Comrade Kim Jong Il. The great leader Comrade Kim Jong Il has guided wisely all the affairs of our Party, State and army for more than three decades, and thus has consolidated and developed our unique style of socialism into an indestructible one.

The leader and the people are firmly united in one idea and will, and the independent policy based on the *Juche* idea has deep roots in our territory. As a result, there has been neither a political vacuum nor instability in our society, and our style of socialism is advancing vigorously, regardless of what others may say.

It is the greatest fortune and happiness for our people to have the respected Comrade Kim Jong Il, the outstanding politician and iron-willed brilliant Commander, as the supreme leader of the Party and State and the Supreme Commander of the revolutionary armed forces. Under the wise leadership of the great leader Comrade Kim Jong Il, our people will make their country prosperous and realize the fatherly leader's lifelong teachings on reunification, convinced of the victory of our style of socialism.

We hold that the question of national reunification should also be settled in the interests of the Korean nation in the context of the maintenance of international peace and security, based on the specific conditions of our country. In view of current realities in the North and South of Korea, characterized by different ideas and systems, national reunification through confederation is the only way to achieve a great national unity independently and peacefully, on the principle of neither side conquering or being conquered by the other. It is quite natural that the proposal for national reunification through confederation set forth by Comrade Kim Il Sung, the fatherly leader of our people, enjoys worldwide support.

The pressing issue in the realization of national reunification through confederation on the Korean peninsula is the establishment of a new institutional mechanism for easing tensions and ensuring peace and security. Since the Armistice Agreement, signed in 1953, and the Military Armistice Commission, the executive body of the Agreement, remain paralysed by unilateral measures on the part of the United States, the establishment of a new peace arrangement is imperative in order to avert the danger of accidental conflicts, and for the maintenance of security on the Korean peninsula.

Accordingly, in April 1994 the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea advanced a proposal for the establishment of a new peace arrangement to replace the outdated system of Korean armistice in ensuring peace and security on the Korean peninsula. It also advanced in February of this year an epoch-making proposal to conclude an interim agreement between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States, a proposal that delineates in detail a new peace arrangement that takes account of the United States policy towards Korea and the present status of Democratic People's Republic of Korea-United States bilateral relations.

The interim agreement may include issues concerning the management of the Military Demarcation Line and Demilitarized Zone; ways of addressing cases of armed conflict and accidents; the composition, duties and terms of reference of a joint military body; and other issues related to the maintenance of security and order.

The United States and South Korean authorities, however, replied to our peace-loving proposal by aggravating tensions with large-scale war exercises and an arms build-up on the Korean peninsula. This situation urgently requires the establishment of a legitimate channel for contacts between military personnel, with a view to preventing accidental armed conflicts and the recurrence of war. It is on the basis of this consideration that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea proposed to the United States working negotiations for talks relating to the conclusion of the interim agreement, and the establishment of an interim mechanism responsible for its implementation, between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and United States military authorities, the real parties to the Korean Armistice Agreement.

There is no doubt that the conclusion of an interim agreement between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States will constitute a breakthrough for the negotiations on the signing of an agreement aimed at the maintenance of a durable peace, and it will, in turn, eventually lead to the creation of an atmosphere favourable for the implementation of the Agreement on Reconciliation, Non-Aggression and Exchanges and Cooperation, between the North and South, adopted by the North and South of Korea.

If the United States is truly interested in the maintenance of peace on the Korean peninsula, as it mentioned while proposing the "four-party talks", it should be willing to withdraw United States troops from South Korea. On the other hand, the United Nations should take its own measures, without delay, to retrieve its name and flag from United States troops in South Korea, thus helping to establish a new peace arrangement on the Korean peninsula.

The existence of the United Nations Command in South Korea constitutes a legal obstacle to turning the state of armistice into a durable peace and terminating the cold war on the Korean peninsula. The United Nations Command was not established by a United Nations resolution. It is only a product of the cold-war era, which came into existence through the abuse of the name of the United Nations. The United Nations Command has moved towards dissolution without any United Nations resolutions during the post-war period, and consequently only United States troops remain there today.

This stark fact presents a vivid illustration of the fact that the "US-ROK Joint Command" is usurping the helmets of United Nations forces and the name of the United Nations.

In the past two years since the adoption of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea-United States Framework Agreement, we have been sincerely fulfilling our obligations under the Agreement, as we have shown by freezing all of our nuclear facilities. For the full implementation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea-United States Framework Agreement, which is aimed at the fundamental resolution of the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula, the United States should, among other things, fulfil its obligations, including lifting economic sanctions against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea; and the present Democratic People's Republic of Korea-United States relationship of confrontation should be transformed into a relationship based on trust.

There is also a need for several other countries pursuing unfriendly policies towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to change their attitudes, which would certainly be conducive to facilitating a resolution of the issue. We will make every effort to ensure peace and security on the Korean peninsula and in the region of North-East Asia.

On this occasion, I wish to express my deep gratitude to the Governments of various countries, the affiliated organs and specialized agencies of the United Nations system, including the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, non-governmental organizations, and individuals for their moral, material and humanitarian assistance and encouragement to our people, which have been provided in the hope of removing, as quickly as possible, the damage caused in recent years by successive natural disasters.

In order to eliminate the legacies of the cold-war era, which has been negated by history, and to enable all countries and nations to exercise their sovereignty on an equal footing, international society should be democratized. The United Nations should, first of all, be restructured into a democratized Organization. The restructuring of the United Nations should be undertaken in a way that will fully represent the interests of developing countries, which form the majority of United Nations Member States, and also ensure the exercise of their sovereignty in the process of resolving major international issues.

Only when the United Nations is restructured will it be able to do its part in the maintenance of international peace and security and ensure democracy and impartiality in its activities. The priority for the democratization of the United Nations is to enhance the authority of the General Assembly, the body in which all Member States are represented equally. We consider that issues relating to international peace and security should be brought directly to the General Assembly for deliberation, and that a new system should be established to endorse Security Council resolutions on the use of force, sanctions and peace-keeping operations. Such measures would enable the Security Council to give full consideration to the interests of Member States and thus prevent the adverse effects suffered by many countries as a result of the implementation of Security Council resolutions.

The restructuring of the Security Council is the most essential element in the democratization of the United Nations. There are a number of issues to be resolved in restructuring the Security Council, and we consider it reasonable to proceed with the restructuring gradually, based on the principle of first finding issues on which agreement can be reached and achieving consensus on each of them. From this viewpoint, we believe that consensus may be reached on issues concerning the enlargement of the non-permanent membership of the Security Council and the improvement of its working methods, both of which have already been agreed upon in principle by Member States.

In this regard, our delegation considers that it is possible for Member States to agree upon, above all, issues such as offsetting the imbalance in regional distribution through an increase of more than 10 seats in the non-permanent membership of the Security Council, to be allocated among the regions of Asia, Africa and Latin America, and through providing the countries concerned, including the parties to disputes, with access to informal consultations of the Security Council.

Japan is taking advantage of the proposed enlargement of the permanent membership of the Security Council by attempting to become a permanent member even though, as a defeated State of the Second World War, it has failed to make an appropriate apology or provide compensation for its war crimes but, instead, is trying to justify them after more than half a century has passed. This makes a mockery of Member States, particularly the Asian countries.

Disarmament — especially nuclear disarmament — remains one of the most important problems for the maintenance of international peace and security. We believe that the nuclear-weapon States should provide negative security assurances to the non-nuclear-weapon States, commit themselves to the non-use of nuclear weapons, and draw up and implement a timetable for their complete abolition.

Despite the end of the cold war, regional, religious and ethnic disputes are being further aggravated in various parts of our planet, and consequently world peace and security are gravely disturbed and peoples are suffering from untold misfortunes resulting from them. It is our consistent stand that disputes between countries and nations should be settled immediately through dialogue and negotiation in the interests of the parties concerned and in conformity with international peace and security.

At present, the maintenance of peace and security in North-East Asia is one of the most vitally important problems. In order to ensure peace and security in North-East Asia, the arms race and any attempt aimed at fostering military collusion with outside forces should be brought to an end. However, the military collusion between the United States and Japan is being intensified, and furthermore, the United States, Japan and South Korea are becoming less disguised in their attempt to build up a tripartite military alliance by repeatedly launching joint military exercises in this region on the pretext of North Korea's so-called invasion.

In particular, the arms race is further accelerated because the Japanese authorities are resorting to the unreasonable policy of trying to become a military super-Power, building up their arms and developing nuclear weapons. We strongly urge the Japanese authorities to end their confrontational acts against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, including an arms build-up under the veil of an "immediate response in case of emergency".

The question of social and economic development is directly linked with international peace and security, and its resolution is therefore one of the important tasks before the United Nations. We hope that agreement will soon be reached on issues with regard to the implementation of the commitment to official development assistance and the alleviation of external debt, thereby facilitating the completion of the Agenda for Development at the earliest possible date in the Ad Hoc Open-Ended Working Group on an Agenda for Development.

We consider that reform of the United Nations in the fields of social and economic development should be directed towards strengthening the agencies responsible for development cooperation under the United Nations system, thereby contributing to accelerating the implementation of the declarations and action plans for the development of developing countries.

The application of "selectivity", which relates development cooperation and technology transfer to questions of "human rights" and "terrorism", should no longer be tolerated, and measures such as economic sanctions should be eliminated to ensure the economic development of Member States and regions.

The Government of our Republic, which regards the man-centred *Juche* idea as its guiding idea, is providing all its people with political, economic and cultural rights and legally protecting the lives and dignity of human beings. We reject the politicization of human rights, which abuses the "question of human rights" in order to infringe upon the sovereignty of other countries, and we oppose all forms of terrorism jeopardizing human lives, as well as any activities encouraging or assisting terrorist acts.

Today, all justice-loving and peace-loving countries and nations are making active efforts to establish a new world order and equitable international economic relations for the twenty-first century. We express our appreciation to the Asian countries in their efforts to ensure peace and stability and to achieve common prosperity in their regions. It is good that the Asia-Europe meeting, held early in 1996, agreed upon the strengthening of economic links and cooperation between the continents.

We support the Arab and Syrian people in their effort to strengthen unity and cooperation, and to achieve a fair and comprehensive resolution of the Middle-East question, including the Palestinian issue, and we express solidarity with the Libyan people in their struggle to defend the sovereignty of their country.

We appreciate the efforts of the Organization of African Unity to resolve social and economic issues and disputes in the African region. We express solidarity with the just cause of the Cuban people to lift the blockade against Cuba, and, with the Latin American people in their endeavours for peace and prosperity in their region.

We will continue as before to develop relations of friendship and cooperation with all countries of the world on the basis of ideas of independence, peace and friendship and will endeavour to fulfil the obligations entrusted to us in the achievement of the common cause of humankind for world peace and security under the wise leadership of the great leader Comrade Kim Jong Il.

The delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea will make sincere efforts towards the successful outcome of the debates on the agenda items before this session of the General Assembly.

The meeting rose at 12.40 p.m.

United Nations
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General Assembly
Fifty-first Session

Official Records

11th plenary meeting
Thursday, 26 September 1996, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Razali Ismail . . . . (Malaysia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Urbizo Panting (Honduras), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

The Acting President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sri Lanka, His Excellency The Honourable Lakshman Kadirgamar.

Mr. Kadirgamar (Sri Lanka): For Sri Lanka it is a matter of particular pride and pleasure that we have a distinguished representative of an Asian country, Malaysia, presiding over the fifty-first session of the General Assembly. Sri Lanka and Malaysia have long enjoyed the warmest ties of friendship. We congratulate the President, and offer him our unstinted support. We also wish to express our appreciation of the contribution made to the success of the historic fiftieth session by His Excellency Diogo Freitas do Amaral of Portugal.

Last year at our Special Commemorative Meeting we pledged to bequeath to the twenty-first century a United Nations equipped, financed and structured to serve effectively the people in whose name it was established. This pledge we must not fail to honour. The peoples of the world will be watching us closely during this session and thereafter to see how well we are proceeding to redeem the promise we made last year in such fine phrases and rhetoric.

The financial constraints confronting the Organization have tempered the once heady enthusiasm among nations for radical reform. Sober pragmatic conclusions now seem inevitable. Yet we must remember that our task, as Sri Lanka's President pointed out last year, is to:

> "enhance the capacity of the United Nations, rather than merely effect economies and scale down its scope." (*Official Records of the General Assembly, Fiftieth Session, Plenary Meetings, 35th meeting, p. 9*)

A viable resource base for the United Nations can be assured not only by effecting greater financial responsibility and sound management, but also, more urgently, by a serious commitment by all Members to honour the financial obligations they are bound to comply with within the terms of the Charter.

We agree that the Secretariat of our Organization needs to be rationalized further. The Organization is now, I believe, sufficiently mature to effect cuts where cuts are due. Programmes affecting developing countries need to be lean, effective and sustainable, which is not the same as saying they should not be touched. Prudent, well-conceived economies could be, and have been, put into effect. We must reform, not deform, the Organization. Above all, the United Nations desperately

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needs a sound financial base. Without that, there will be no prospect of building the streamlined, efficient and effective world Organization that we all dream of. We will merely waste our time and energy building castles in the air.

The working groups on the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and on the strengthening of the United Nations system have made some progress, although no finality has been reached in regard to the main areas of focus. We believe, however, that these efforts should continue. We should redouble our energies to reach consensus.

The main organs of the United Nations, it must be emphasized, will be credible and effective only to the extent that they secure the confidence of the general membership and ensure that their decisions enjoy general acceptance. With regard to the Security Council, it is our view that today's political and economic realities, rather than yesterday's military power, need to be reflected in any decisions to be taken on questions such as that of the permanent membership of the Council and the enlargement of its overall membership.

The United Nations must neither master nor servant be.

First, despite fashionable theories about the need to limit national sovereignty, the members of the Organization remain sovereign, independent States. Each State, however small and weak it may be, jealously guards its sovereignty. Hence, where the United Nations intervenes, it should do so expressly within the terms of the Charter. The consent and cooperation of States are vital to ensure the success of any United Nations endeavour which impinges on the territory of a Member State. Only such an approach would guarantee the safety and security of United Nations personnel and the welfare and interests of the people in the receiving State.

In playing its role in conflict resolution and peacemaking, it is important that our Organization should not stray into domestic issues and conflicts which are within the domestic jurisdiction of the States concerned. The Organization should play its role only with the acceptance of the countries concerned. This position arises from the simple logic that the States concerned are best equipped, in the first instance, to deal with these issues, being familiar with the socio-economic milieu in which they arise. Otherwise, United Nations action could be counter-productive and could lead even to the exacerbation of conflicts. Nor should United Nations mandates be used to serve the interests of any one State or group of States. The United Nations must not be used as a franchise to give legitimacy to causes that may not reflect the general will of the membership, on whose behalf the Security Council should act at all times.

Now more than ever before we must reaffirm our collective respect for the fundamental principles of the Charter of the United Nations. The smaller nations of the world must receive constant reassurance from the larger nations that their interests will be safeguarded and their sovereignty respected. The smaller nations have only the United Nations to look to for the protection of their national interests.

First, translated into practical terms, developing countries, which are under-represented, need to have their numbers increased in the Security Council. Secondly, there are Member States in the Organization which advance arguments to support permanent seats in the Council no less cogent than the arguments tendered 50 years ago to justify the special status of the current five permanent members.

My delegation also notes the useful discussions that have taken place on the subject of "An Agenda for Peace". We feel that further work needs to be done in this area.

The subject matter of the Agenda for Development is of crucial importance. It underlies the central role of our Organization in the field of economic cooperation and development. While noting the progress that has been achieved in this endeavour, we should reiterate our commitment to move speedily in this area which vitally concerns the economic advancement and stability of developing countries.

I turn now to the problem of terrorism. The epithet "terrorist" has been too often hurled unjustifiably at genuine national liberation movements, those, for instance, which struggled against foreign occupation and apartheid. The legitimacy of such organizations has been recognized by the United Nations. They are organizations which have sat with us here to discuss the issues which had compelled them to armed action. We are happy to see those true movements of the people now occupying seats in this Organization as full Members. We should not spend time seeking to evolve a comprehensive definition of terrorism, lest we become helplessly mired in a semantic minefield. An international consensus against terrorism, based on the recognition of stark reality, has matured over the years. It is imperative now to implement that consensus.

The world is aware that Sri Lanka has been racked with the anguish of a violent ethnic conflict which has sapped our energies for almost two decades. We have been dealing for many years with an armed group which seeks to dismember our country by violent means, resorting to terrorism as a means of achieving this illegitimate goal. This group — the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) — has been perpetrating a series of terroristic acts, causing death and destruction in many parts of my country. This extremist group does not in any meaningful sense represent the people they claim to fight for. They have never sought a mandate from the people at an election. They have kept out of the democratic mainstream, when many of the minority parties have entered the consultative process to seek redress for their grievances through democratic means.

We are working on a set of proposals introduced by my Government to address minority grievances, which includes far reaching constitutional changes.

The LTTE does not believe in the path of peaceful negotiations, having put their faith in the power of the gun. The peace process, they fear, would marginalize them; hence the recourse to increased violence. We are aware that — in terms of finance, equipment and war *matériel* — this group draws support from persons outside our country, but not from other States. There is not a single State that supports them either in word or deed. They receive support from misguided members of the Tamil community who live and work in the affluent countries, or through extortion, drug trafficking, gun-running, people-smuggling or other illegal activities in many developed countries, in abuse of the hospitality of the host Governments and in violation of their laws.

In Sri Lanka, the terrorists have deliberately targeted civilians. They have bombed a rush-hour commuter train and busy office buildings and have shot up rural villages, causing the death of thousands of innocent civilians, including large numbers of women and children. Many thousands have been injured and maimed. As Sri Lanka's President emphasized last year at the fiftieth-anniversary session, concerted international action is essential to combat terrorism and compel terrorists to renounce violence.

On that occasion President Clinton remarked that no one was immune from terrorism.

The summit meeting of the Group of Seven and Russia in Lyon and the subsequent ministerial meeting on terrorism in Paris took bold initiatives which need to be developed into practical action. The proposals for a convention on terrorist bombings and the proposals to prevent the abuse of asylum and refugee laws are particularly timely initiatives. Sri Lanka looks forward to their elaboration during this session.

Efforts need also to be made to further strengthen and give legal effect to the 1994 Declaration on Measures to Eliminate International Terrorism. Now we need more than a mere declaration; we need a convention on measures to combat terrorism. Concerted international cooperation is necessary to ensure that the terrorist does not enjoy safe havens anywhere in the world. The territory of no State should be permitted to be used in any manner that would encourage or sustain terrorist activity in another. Fund-raising activity on foreign soil in particular, either directly or indirectly through so-called charitable funds, must be prohibited. Should terrorism be permitted through international apathy to fester, it would poison the international body politic, enervating democratic processes, processes the international community is obliged to sustain.

It would be myopic for a nation to stand aloof or to disown responsibility for combating acts of terrorism which may seem too distant to evoke anything more than curiosity. With the English poet John Donne, I would say, "never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee." Terrorists have the means to move freely across borders, have used chemical weapons, and could well have access to nuclear weapons.

Global interdependence is undoubtedly a modern reality. However, opinions vary on the real implications of that phenomenon on the economies of developing countries. In the development debate, globalization and the call for integration into a single global economic grid are held out as the primary or even the sole option for developing countries seeking cooperation with developed countries.

But cooperation must not be confused with conformity. The specific character of individual developing countries, including the social and political compulsions facing their Governments, needs to be taken into account. Globalization involves the free flow of capital, the liberalization of trade, the privatization of State enterprises, the freezing of price controls and the scaling down of welfare measures even for the most vulnerable sectors of the population. These have not always proved to be a panacea for those developing countries which have accepted them as economic injunctions.

It is important that such institutions as the World Trade Organization, the successor institution to GATT, be sensitive to the concerns of developing countries in such matters as external investment flows, which should not be clogged with linkages to issues more relevant to other organizations and institutions. Similarly, while sound social and environmental policies are essential for all societies, arbitrarily imposed standards should not be used as excuses for trade discrimination or concealed protectionism. The Government of Sri Lanka has provided opportunities for its private sector to advance as the principal engine of growth. Sri Lanka continues to welcome investment — economic and technological collaboration with foreign entrepreneurs on the basis of mutual benefit. These efforts, however, would be negated if such economic cooperation were pursued only on terms overwhelmingly favourable to one side.

Despite the pressures and tensions caused by a situation of conflict, we have succeeded in keeping our old democratic institutions and traditions alive and strong. We give our best attention to the protection and promotion of human rights. In furthering an elected Government's accountability to its own people, the Government of Sri Lanka has taken several measures to strengthen the legal framework and ensure the effective implementation of human-rights standards. One of the significant measures we took this year was the establishment by act of Parliament of a Human Rights Commission. We have ensured that the act guarantees independence of action for the Commission. The areas of competence of the Commission include monitoring, investigative and advisory functions. The act also addresses the question of liability of non-State actors for human-rights violations.

My Government has decided to accede to the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights as a logical next step in a series of national measures. Sri Lanka will thus be among the few countries that have taken the progressive decision to ratify the Optional Protocol. The Government has given the highest priority to Sri Lanka's obligations under international covenants and we are committed to continuing our cooperation with United Nations human-rights mechanisms.

Looking at the world, we see that, in Bosnia, following the Dayton Agreement, the guns have been finally silenced, and we are happy to note that the peace Agreement is holding up. Sri Lanka has condemned the atrocities committed in Bosnia, particularly the inhuman and cruel treatment of the Muslims. We believe that a settlement will not be complete unless those responsible for the atrocities are brought to justice.

In the Middle East, we hope the peace process will move on, without losing the momentum it had gained, despite the changes in the political scene in that area. Sri Lanka reiterates its support for the peace process, the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and the establishment of conditions of peace and stability for all States in the region to live within secure boundaries. We commend the efforts taken by the United States of America, other concerned States and the States of the region to achieve the objective of bringing peace to the Middle East.

We share the concerns of the world community in regard to the crises that have overtaken Liberia and Burundi and express our fervent hope that peace will be restored to these troubled regions.

In our own region, South Asia, we have recorded progress in our efforts at regional cooperation. We celebrated the tenth anniversary of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) last December, heralded by the coming into force of the South Asian Preferential Trade Arrangement. SAARC has set itself the goal of achieving a South Asian free-trade area by the early years of the new century. The private sectors of our region are engaged in close cooperation. We remain deeply committed to our abiding concern of alleviating, if not eradicating, poverty in our countries within a realistic time-frame.

Sri Lanka has turned increasingly towards promoting economic cooperation with countries in the Asia-Pacific region with which we identify closely. We see regional cooperation as a source of political stability as well as mutual economic benefit. We have recently become a partner in the Indian Ocean rim initiative. We have applied for membership of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Council. We also expect that, when the required ratifications are completed, the Indian Ocean Marine Affairs Cooperation will provide a further impetus to technical and other cooperation among Indian Ocean countries. At the political level, Sri Lanka, with other members of the United Nations Ad Hoc Committee on the Indian Ocean, is reviewing the concept of the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace in the light of current realities in the region.

I wish to refer at this point to the Non-Aligned Movement, of which Sri Lanka is a founding member. Today — 26 September — is a particularly significant date for Sri Lanka, which commemorates a great patriot, the late S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike, who was assassinated on this date. He was Prime Minister from 1956 to 1959. He ushered in a uniquely peaceful, non-violent transformation of Sri Lankan society. His electoral victory in 1956 led to the empowerment of the rural, the underprivileged, the mass of the people of the country, and set the country's foreign policy firmly towards non-alignment.

Two days ago, we celebrated the thirty-fifth anniversary of the founding, in a formal sense, of the Non-Aligned Movement. Mr. Bandaranaike did not live to see the Non-Aligned Movement firmly established in 1961. However, in 1956, 40 years ago, he addressed this General Assembly and said:

> "We are supposed to be the 'uncommitted' nations. I strongly object to that word. We are committed up to the hilt. We are committed to preserve decency in dealings between nations, we are committed to the cause of justice and freedom....
>
> "No doubt the prevention of war is a necessary factor for peace, but peace, believe me, is something much more positive than that, for peace in its true sense means human understanding, human friendship and cooperation out of which, indeed, peace in its true form alone can arise. I look upon the United Nations as the one machine available to mankind today through which it can express this unconquerable spirit of man in its efforts to achieve that peace, friendship and collaboration." (*Official Records of the General Assembly, Eleventh Session, Plenary Meetings, 590th meeting, p. 234-35*)

The policies he initiated in respect of Sri Lanka — and I confine my remarks to foreign policy — were carried forward by his successor, Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike, who, as Prime Minister, attended the first Non-Aligned summit in Belgrade in 1961 and subsequently presided over the fifth summit of the Movement in Colombo.

The Movement, which has a membership of 113 countries, is today the largest grouping of independent sovereign States in the world, apart from the United Nations itself, which have come together with the common objective of achieving peace, prosperity and the welfare of their people, a majority of whom belong to the third world. With the end of the cold war, there were sceptics who thought that the Movement would die in the absence of a clear role for the future. We have been able to dispel this misapprehension and chart a new course for the Movement. It has emerged today as the voice of the third world, of the smaller countries which are crying out for a place in the sun and demanding opportunities for economic development and self-expression.

Although the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons has been extended indefinitely, it is to be remembered that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the ultimate end of the non-proliferation process. As a member of the Conference on Disarmament, our delegation has worked hard to ensure that all nuclear testing be banned as an interim measure, leading eventually to the total elimination of all nuclear weapons. The text of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty adopted by the General Assembly a few days ago was the result of several years' patient negotiations, yet its terms do not contain a firm and clear commitment to nuclear disarmament and the total elimination of all nuclear weapons. We would have expected the scope of prohibition to be truly comprehensive and the provisions for entry into force not to be self-debilitating. We look forward to the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention as well as the Convention relating to bacteriological and toxin weapons.

Sri Lanka remains a loyal and dedicated Member of the United Nations committed to upholding the noble principles of the Charter. Our faith and trust in this great institution, fashioned half a century ago, despite all its weaknesses and failures discerned in the intervening years, remains steadfast. These blemishes are after all but a mirror-image of the infirmities and inadequacies of all human kind. So we have no need to be either discouraged or despondent. We stand firm in the belief that the United Nations is still the best hope for this world. Indeed, we have no alternative or option in this matter, for to give up hope is only to slide into the depths of despair.

But our hopes for the United Nations must be grounded in action, in a firm resolve to act decisively in the best interests of this great institution, indeed of all humanity, untainted by the narrow national interests which have dogged our path in the course of these past five decades. This is no easy task, but unless we remain unyielding in our determination to ensure that the United Nations remains faithful to the tasks envisioned by its founders, we will have failed the generations that follow us in the twenty-first century.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Chile, His Excellency Mr. José Miguel Insulza.

Mr. Insulza (Chile) (*interpretation from Spanish*): First of all, Sir, I wish to express our pleasure at seeing the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Honduras — a country with which we have long-standing and well-established ties of friendship and with which we are currently working in the Security Council — preside over this meeting. I would also like through you to convey my Government's congratulations to Ambassador Razali Ismail on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session.

This is a transitional period for the United Nations and is therefore not devoid of complexities and uncertainty. Yet we still have confidence in the ability of Member States and in the privileged forum provided by this Organization to develop new policies and management structures to deal with the gamut of emerging international problems.

As this session of the General Assembly begins, we once again renew our commitment to the principles and purposes of the Charter, the living instrument essential to the future work of this Organization. The United Nations is an Organization which, through its nature, principles and objectives, transcends any individual or national interests to represent, instead, the interests of all.

Not even those who criticize the United Nations in the hopes that they can weaken it or shrink its role have ever been able to propose any better way for us to come together to address the major problems of an increasingly interdependent world. That is why we are convinced that, far from becoming weaker, this Organization will be called upon to play an increasingly important role in this new era of globalization, in which cooperation is the only possible option for a true international order.

International peace and security, free trade, social development based on growth with equity, environmental protection, democracy and human rights are the basic components of the future work of our multilateral system. These are the areas of action of our Organization to which Chile attaches the highest priority and in which we will try, within our means to make our greatest contribution.

It has often been said that the end of the super-Power confrontation that characterized the first 50 years of the life of this Organization makes it easier than ever to shape the conditions for peace and stability. And yet, the challenges of bipolar confrontation have been replaced by new ones posed by the emergence of numerous local conflicts. These are often characterized by mass violations of human rights, uncontrolled population flows and humanitarian emergencies that threaten the security of individuals and States and eventually may affect the international system as a whole.

Our participation in the work of the Security Council is aimed at contributing our fair share to the maintenance of international peace and security. We encourage preventive diplomacy, consensus solutions, the implementation of measures to contain conflicts, the promotion of peaceful solutions through peace-keeping operations, conciliation, good offices and, in particular, the protection of affected populations and victims.

At the same time, it is indisputable that peace and security are not simply the absence of tensions and conflict between States. Harmony between people within the same border has now become a fundamental factor in international peace and security. Chile has suggested that the Security Council should act in cases where there is a real or potential risk of mass and systematic violations to which the international community has reacted strongly and when earlier mechanisms or bodies trying to resolve the problem have been exhausted.

Recent measures adopted by the Council, such as resolution 688 (1991) on protecting the Kurdish minority, 770 (1992) on providing assistance to victims of the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina, resolution 986 (1995) on alleviating the burden of sanctions on the civilian Iraqi population, are a few examples of a broader and more progressive interpretation of what constitutes a threat to peace and establish valuable precedents for helping the Security Council to deal with these kinds of conflict.

These criteria also guided us in our active participation on the question of Burundi, which led to the adoption of resolution 1072 (1996) establishing procedures for the various parties to the conflict to be able to agree on a political path to a peaceful resolution of their differences. We must continue to pay close attention to developments in this situation. The international community, the United Nations and the Security Council cannot risk another tragedy like that of Rwanda and must exhaust all possible means of averting such a tragedy.

Today we would also like to express our great concern at the serious crisis that has arisen in the last few hours affecting the peace process in the Middle East, a process we have supported from the outset. We urge the parties to the conflict not to waste what has been built up in the last few years and to resume dialogue within the context of respect for agreements reached and for the beliefs of the peoples involved.

Establishing stability requires clear commitment to disarmament and arms control and limitation. My country has played an active role in this area, as shown in the recent ratification of the Chemical Weapons Convention, membership in the Conference on Disarmament, which Chile had long aspired to, ratification of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and our unstinting support for nuclear-weapon-free zones.

Last Tuesday, 24 September 1996, I had the honour to sign on behalf of my country the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Just one year ago, this Assembly was discussing the nuclear-weapon tests still being conducted in the South Pacific and Asia. Today we are meeting to sign a Treaty that eliminates those tests once and for all and is the combined effort of almost all the countries in this Assembly, including all the present nuclear-weapon States. When the United Nations is criticized for its alleged inefficiency I think we should also vaunt our successes.

These initiatives, along with progress in the area of conventional weapons and weapons of mass destruction, help to create the right conditions for peace and security and enable the international community to concentrate its efforts and material resources on the development of nations and environmental protection.

Peacekeeping operations are one of the most important instruments of this system. Peacekeeping forces have to strive for results in the framework of clear and well-defined and legitimate mandates. Chile has participated in peacekeeping operations in India, Pakistan, the Middle East, Cambodia and Kuwait, and we are currently taking part in the activities of the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) in Iraq.

However, there is no doubt that this mechanism needs to be tailored to dealing with current political circumstances. To this end, Chile is active in deliberations on how to improve planning and rapid-reaction capacity to deal with incipient conflicts. In all these aspects, a multilateral approach, action that enjoys the consent of the parties and financing through the Organization all help to ensure success in our work. We hope to increase significantly our contribution to operations such as the ones I have just described.

A broad understanding of the maintenance of international peace and security requires decisive action in the area of social development, democracy and the promotion of human rights. The world order of the next century will need broader basic freedoms. The global society of the next century is appearing as an open, heterogenous one, rich in material potential and new developments. What is needed now is to create conditions to enable people and States to make the most of this new setting, with increased access to the goods that are the fruit of rapid technological development.

In this respect, the six recent world conferences and summits on the environment and development, human rights, population and development, women, social development and, most recently, human settlements, have all been geared towards promoting protection of the individual and gradually creating a framework for social rights.

One tangible result of these meetings, in the social area, was the emergence of national coordinating bodies to implement the agreements signed. But these efforts are not enough, given the tragic reality of most of the less developed peoples, which means that the United Nations system must play an ever stronger role in the international social area. We must speed up the process of implementation within the context of the United Nations and of the agreements that emerged from Rio de Janeiro, Vienna, Cairo, Copenhagen, Beijing and Istanbul.

The first steps have now been taken within the various bodies of the system, particularly in the Economic and Social Council and its functional commissions. It is encouraging that the Economic and Social Council bodies dealing with sustainable development, women, social development and population have adopted multi-year agendas as a follow-up to the conferences.

Similarly, the agreements reached at the World Summit for Social Development include the decision to hold a special session of this Assembly in the year 2000 to assess the implementation of the agreements.

In this connection, Chile wishes to propose the establishment of a working group of this Assembly that, with that special session as its basis, can provide follow-up to the six conferences, taking into account the Agenda for Development, so that in the year 2000 the General Assembly can take up a very wide-ranging and coordinated assessment of the implementation of the commitments of the 1990s and make the necessary recommendations for future work.

In recent years Latin America has taken major steps forward with regard to free trade. This Assembly has already heard about progress in the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR), Chile's recent accession to that agreement and MERCOSUR's decision to negotiate similar agreements with the Andean Group and Mexico. Taken alongside the progress made by other subregional groups, such as the Central America Common Market (CACM) and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), these achievements all go to show the new impetus in Latin America for integration based on economic ideas that differ from those of the past but that remain true to the political will for unity that has always existed among our peoples.

However, none of these regional developments in which Chile has been very active constitutes an alternative to multilateralism. Chile continues to believe that a multilateral system to establish standards and practices to ensure free trade throughout the world, with clear institutional machinery for negotiations and dispute settlement, is the best option for the global economy and for each of our countries.

For this reason we have always insisted that our negotiations fit into the multilateral framework of the World Trade Organization (WTO). Latin America wants to be integrated so that it can become more of a part of the global economy, not cut off from it. Our bilateral and regional agreements are based on open regionalism. The best proof that this is being put into practice is that during this period of increased integration, external tariffs in the countries of our region have also fallen considerably, compared with those of the rest of the world.

One of the most promising developments of recent years has been the strengthening of the multilateral trade system through the establishment of the WTO. The existence of a standing multilateral forum means that more energy can be devoted to implementing the agreements reached and provides an institutional framework for continuous progress in negotiations and for opening up world trade.

In this connection, Chile attaches great importance to the follow-up meeting to the Uruguay Round, to be held in Singapore in December 1996. This, the first biannual meeting in the framework of the WTO, will be crucial in determining how effective the new mechanism is.

In the last few years many regions and countries in the world have made major progress towards broadening and consolidating democracy and respect for human rights. Latin America in particular has been experiencing a rapid movement towards democracy that is unprecedented in its history. This is accompanied by a considerable increase in political dialogue and regional coordination, evident mainly in the Rio Group, which has been active and fruitful for 10 years now.

Far from making us complacent, this emphasizes our concern that in many parts of the world there are still situations of massive violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Sometimes these situations relate to the peace and security problems we mentioned earlier.

As democracies develop, the support given them by the people depends more and more on their ability to ensure stable, efficient and transparent governments. The legitimacy of democratic governments is closely related to their accountability, but in many countries there is still corruption, inefficiency and insensitivity to social needs. This erodes the legitimacy of democracy and highlights its fragility.

The Government of our President, Eduardo Frei, has made democratic governance the main subject of the sixth summit of Ibero-American Heads of State and Government, to be held in Chile in November 1996. To this end, we have enjoyed the valuable cooperation of the United Nations, through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). We hope that our Organization's work in this area will spread to other regions in coming years.

One of the most dramatic changes for mankind in the last few decades has been our awareness that nature is fragile in the hands of man. There is a vulnerability in nature we had not suspected until we saw the damage done, much of it irreparable. And so there is a new dimension to human responsibility to nature. The possibility of altering life or our planet for the worse means that our unbounded scientific and technological power must be accompanied by a new principle: and that is the idea of shared responsibility.

The work facing us is hard, but the path was already laid out in 1992 at the Conference on Environment and Development. In Rio de Janeiro there was agreement on fundamental aspects. On the basis of the consensus, and the commitments reached there, my country is prepared to proceed. Since that Earth Summit, Chile has further developed its environmental legislation. We have embraced the principles of the Rio Declaration that we consider fundamental, such as preventing environmental pollution, cooperation and the primary responsibility of the polluter. The State has accepted its obligation to adopt the most suitable instruments for preventive environmental management. But we also believe that society must be given a leading role in protecting the environment, and to this end various social actors must be more committed and more responsible.

My Government thinks it is also important to stress the political commitment of the world community to this issue that is by nature international and in many respects global. Hence, we attach great importance to the functioning of the bodies set up and to the monitoring of the agreements reached at the Earth Summit.

Developments in the international arena, the increasing diversity of issues to be taken up and the number of actors involved in the United Nations — all of this revitalizing the reform process of our Organization essential in order to adapt it to emerging realities and challenges. Integrated and multidisciplinary focus must be given preference in dealing with these problems. This constitutes the conceptual framework of the Organization and a basis for the urgently needed process of reform. This requires a very thorough analysis of the content of our multilateral work, of the Organization's agenda, of the functioning of intergovernmental bodies, of our human and financial resources and of the structure of the Secretariat. By doing all that, we can carry out reforms that are more than rhetoric, that will enable us to take up the challenges of the next century with policies and organizations adapted to the new reality.

Chile wishes to reiterate its appreciation for the work being done by the Secretary-General in this area. In difficult budgetary circumstances and facing a very difficult political situation, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali has decisively begun, within his purview, the process of reforming the Organization.

We welcome all initiatives that can enhance the efficiency of our Organization, reduce its bureaucratic excesses or alleviate its financial problems. But we believe that United Nations reform should not be mistakenly identified with one single issue of administration or budgetary efficiency. There is quite a contradiction between saying that we need an Organization adapted to the new challenges and focused on the next century, and then reducing the practical debate simply to cost-cutting and better control of resources. We have to enhance administrative efficiency, but we must also appreciate substantive effectiveness. Our objective should be to strengthen the Organization as well as to streamline it.

Before concluding, I cannot fail to mention a question of reform on this year's agenda that is more urgent than it was in previous years. The plethora of decisions taken by the Security Council has resulted in a growing desire on the part of the other Members of the United Nations to be more involved in Council decisions, so as to strengthen its legitimacy and the political support for its actions.

Improving the working methods of the Security Council has opened up additional ways of enhancing its credibility. There has been progress, but much remains to be done, particularly in connection with consultations with countries that contribute troops to peacekeeping operations, consultations with countries neighbouring a conflict area that might be affected, and third States that are negatively affected by the application of sanctions.

A second determining factor of legitimacy and political support for Council decisions relates to its membership. In this connection, Chile believes it essential to resolve once and for all the problems of increasing the membership of the Security Council, which have concerned the Assembly since 1992. We think there is a broad base of agreement for allowing Germany and Japan to become permanent members of the Council, and at the same time for giving developing countries one permanent seat per region, the occupants of which would be elected at the regional level.

Also, in order to meet the need for representativity, given the great increase in membership of the United

Nations in the last decade, the number of non-permanent seats should be increased from 10 to 15, with appropriate equitable geographical distribution. A membership of twenty-five members would not undermine the effectiveness of the Security Council but would enhance the representativity of its actions.

However, we wish to emphasize that Chile is willing to act with maximum flexibility here. This means we are willing to consider other proposals by other Member States that also seek to combine the two fundamental elements that should guide our decision: recognition of the new international realities and a legitimate desire for representativity in the principal bodies of our system.

We wished to touch upon those issues that, in Chile's view, will be the Organization's main tasks in the years to come, with a view to establishing the framework of stability and legitimacy necessary to achieve United Nations objectives. Chile commits its firm support to this difficult understanding, which will be attainable with the will and participation of all members of the international community.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Culture, Youth and Sport of the Principality of Liechtenstein, Her Excellency Ms. Andrea Willi.

Ms. Willi (Liechtenstein): At the outset I should like to congratulate Ambassador Razali Ismail on his election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session. The Liechtenstein delegation is confident that his leadership will strengthen the United Nations ability to pursue the purposes and principles of the Charter.

One year after the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, it is appropriate to take stock once again of the achievements and shortcomings of our Organization and, first and foremost, to define the measures we have to take in order to face the challenges that lie ahead of us. One of the recurrent topics at the fiftieth session of the General Assembly was the call for a comprehensive and effective reform with a view both to enhancing the efficiency of the United Nations and to reducing the costs of its work.

I wish to express my appreciation for all the efforts that have been made by the Secretariat to meet this need, particularly to the Department of Administration and Management and to the Office of Internal Oversight Services, which have made an important contribution in this regard. However, it remains a fact that more needs to be done in order to cope with the financial crisis the Organization continues to struggle with. Even though there seems to be a consensus concerning the need for further such action, we were not able, during the fiftieth session of the General Assembly, to reach agreement on the measures that are so urgently needed. In our view, it is of the utmost importance that the high-level working group on the financial situation established by the General Assembly should adopt, during the fifty-first session, proposals for a solution of the financial crisis, including the payment of arrears. I should like to take this opportunity to express the support of the Government of Liechtenstein for the proposals that have been put forward by the European Union in this respect.

We support ongoing efforts with a view to a reform and enlargement of the Security Council. We are of the view that the reform of the Security Council should be consistent with the principle of the sovereign equality of all States, as enshrined in the Charter. Liechtenstein agrees with those Member countries that have said that with regard to the distribution of new permanent seats, the financial and other contributions to achieving the purposes of the Organization as well as a balanced geographic distribution should be adequately taken into account.

The President took the Chair.

Another area of crucial importance for the future work and credibility of our Organization is peacekeeping activities, which attract the particular interest and concern of the world community. The experience of the recent past has made it very clear that the United Nations needs to be better equipped in order to respond effectively and quickly to prevent situations that threaten international peace and security. If we are to enhance the credibility of the United Nations as a whole and the effectiveness of United Nations peace-keeping operations, we have to ensure that every such mission is given a clear mandate and vested with the funds necessary for its full implementation. Very useful proposals to that end have been made by the Secretary-General in his report entitled "An Agenda for Peace". We have noted with satisfaction the progress made by the Working Group established by the General Assembly to discuss the Agenda for Peace, and the provisional agreements reached by two of the four subgroups dealing with specific aspects of the Agenda for Peace. I wish to express my hope that the two other subgroups, which have to discuss the very important questions of preventive diplomacy and peacemaking, and post-conflict peace-building, respectively, will also be able to conclude their work soon, so a comprehensive agreement on the Agenda for Peace can be adopted.

Some of the events that have taken place over the past few years have made it very clear that more attention should be given to preventive diplomacy, which can avert human suffering and reduce costs considerably. One of the situations where determined preventive action is urgently needed is the one that has arisen in Burundi, where patterns of large-scale violations of human rights and the risk of a further worsening of the situation continue to exist. It is indeed disturbing to note that the international community has not been able to take all possible measures to prevent a further deterioration of this situation.

Liechtenstein made its own contribution to the furthering of conflict prevention by introducing an initiative on the right of self-determination before the General Assembly at its forty-eighth session. It has been stated many times that the vast majority of armed or other violent conflicts today are no longer conflicts between but within States. Such conflicts often have their roots in tensions between communities living within States, and the thrust of the initiative of Liechtenstein is aimed at finding peaceful solutions to such situations before one of the parties involved resorts to violence. It seems to us that the right of self-determination, the exercise of which has played a crucial role in the history of the United Nations, progressively needs to be seen outside its traditional context and should be further developed and adapted to the conditions that prevail in today's world.

Many cases of intra-State conflicts have made clear that it is timely and necessary for the international community to develop mechanisms that will enable communities living within States to exercise the right of self-determination in flexible ways and in accordance with existing international law. The Liechtenstein research programme that was established at Princeton University as part of the contribution of Liechtenstein to the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations is intended to provide further know-how for, and assistance in, developing such mechanisms, and I should like to take this opportunity to thank all those countries that continue to support us in this endeavour.

As a small State, Liechtenstein attaches the utmost importance to strengthening international law and to effective disarmament. We therefore actively supported the draft resolution, submitted by Australia on behalf of a large number of countries, that enabled us to adopt the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) after lengthy and very difficult negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament. The CTBT will take us one step further towards achieving our goal of a world free of nuclear weapons. The Government of Liechtenstein is of the view that it is a crucial step. Tomorrow, therefore, I will sign the CTBT on behalf of Liechtenstein, and I would like to express our hope that as many countries as possible will do the same.

One year ago we met in Beijing and unanimously adopted a Declaration and a Platform for Action that represent a new international commitment to the goals of equality, development and peace for all women in the world. In Liechtenstein we are in the process of preparing the implementation of the Platform for Action, which includes, *inter alia*: motivation for women to enter politics and to present their candidatures; specific academic and vocational guidance for girls; measures to facilitate the compatibility of professional and family life; and sensitization towards the problem of violence against women and children.

Peace is a prerequisite for the attainment of equality between women and men. Unfortunately, aggression and armed and other types of conflict persist in many parts of the world. Women rarely have any role in the decisions leading to armed conflicts, but they contribute to a large extent to preserving social order in times of war and armed conflicts. We believe that women could and should play an increased role in conflict resolution, and we would particularly welcome more women being appointed as Special Representatives of the Secretary-General.

There has been a dramatic growth in the need for humanitarian assistance in recent years. The United Nations system, playing a major role in the field of humanitarian relief, has been tested almost to breaking point by recent crises. Complex emergency situations have resulted in increased demands on scarce resources. There has been criticism that as a result of concentration on emergency relief, little effort was made to devise recovery programmes. The humanitarian community will have to play an important role in ensuring the transition from relief to rehabilitation. We should not forget, however, that it has been only four years since humanitarian action provided by the United Nations system was given structure and coherence.

Anti-personnel land-mines, with their immensely destructive effects on individuals and communities around the world, are a humanitarian tragedy. Innocent civilians, in particular women, children, refugees and displaced persons, are at greatest risk. Furthermore, mines impede the rehabilitation and reconstruction of societies torn by war. In keeping with its mandate to develop and promote international humanitarian law, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has continuously called attention to weapons whose effects threaten to undermine that law, and we commend the ICRC for its efforts in that respect. I wish to reiterate our call for a total ban on these deadly weapons.

We hope that, during this fifty-first session of the General Assembly, we will be able to strengthen the United Nations, which has been indispensable to the international community for more than 50 years, and to enhance its credibility in the eyes of the peoples whom our Organization represents.

The President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Singapore, His Excellency Mr. S. Jayakumar.

Mr. Jayakumar (Singapore): Last year we met in a celebratory mood. But after every party comes the sober dawn, and we now face the sombre reality that the United Nations risks marginalization. Its role in the twenty-first century is not to be taken for granted.

The sad truth is that today the United Nations plays little or no practical role in the management of the most important political, strategic and economic questions of our time. But this was not always the case as we recall: the United Nations played a significant role in easing the pangs of decolonization. Even at the height of the cold war, the United Nations was not an unimportant instrument through which the super-Powers could manage regional proxy conflicts and, on occasion, even direct nuclear confrontation.

This contrast with its past should lead us to regard the present and future of the United Nations with deep concern. We can no longer postpone a critical examination of fundamental issues. It is for this reason that my delegation is especially gratified to see Malaysia occupy the presidency of the General Assembly at this important turning point for the future of the United Nations. We in the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) know Tan Sri Razali Ismail for his commitment and clear thinking.

I can do no better than echo what you, Mr. President, said about reform in the first plenary meeting of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session; we entirely agree with you. The interminable debates about the need for United Nations reform have led to precious little real reform. These debates have served to conceal and not to clarify basic issues. An important theme has been the need for greater efficiency; we all support that. No one can seriously argue against more productivity, better management and less waste. The key question, however, is: efficient to do what?

What kind of United Nations do we really want and for what purposes? We all know that the purposes of the United Nations are enshrined in the very first Article of the Charter. Nevertheless, the answers are not self-evident. We all know that the first of the United Nations purposes is

> "To maintain international peace and security".

But what does this mean? The more extravagant post-cold war hopes for a new Agenda for Peace have proved illusory. The failure of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) raises troubling questions about the role of the United Nations after the cold war. The essential lesson to be drawn from UNPROFOR's fate is not merely how the Security Council became a political theatre to assuage the domestic concerns of some of its principal members; nor is it only the truism that the United Nations could do no more than what its principal members allowed it to do. The real tragedy for the United Nations in Bosnia is that when the major Powers finally decided to get serious about what they determined to be a threat to international peace and security, their preferred instrument was clearly not the United Nations.

Again, we all agree that poverty breeds conflict, and that the gap between the rich and poor is widening. Yet the Agenda for Development has been mired in theological arguments about the definition of sustainable development. Now I do not mean to suggest that clarity of objectives is unimportant. But the real issues are not that complicated, because what the least developed most urgently need is not intellectual sophistry but help: help to build the institutions and formulate the policies that will allow them to plug into the global economy. The United Nations has not adequately met these challenges.

The stalemate in reform is not merely because of the difficulty of the questions or because of conflicting interests. Of course, the issues are thorny and differences in interests inevitable in any system of sovereign States. That is precisely why we need the United Nations, as the

Charter envisages, "to be a centre for harmonizing the actions of nations".

Why then is the United Nations today less able to perform this vital function? In my view, it is because it has been reluctant to adequately confront the implications of the two most significant developments of our time. First, the end of the cold war and, secondly, the emergence of a truly global world economy. The conjunction of these two events is changing the manner in which States relate to each other in unprecedented and fundamental ways. Yet these developments are at best only imperfectly reflected in the United Nations. And any international organization that divorces itself from international realities has no future.

The most obvious consequence for the United Nations since the end of the cold war has been the great increase in membership. But the change in the nature of Members has occasioned less comment. In 1945, small States, which I define as those having a population of 10 million or less, formed 59 per cent of a United Nations with 51 Members. Half a century later, in 1995, small States by the same definition formed the same percentage of a United Nations of 185 Members. And 23 of the 26 countries — more than 88 per cent — that joined the United Nations after 1989 were also small States. I expect that when the United Nations membership expands further, as it surely must, the majority of new Members will also be small States.

This is because changes in the structure of the international economy engendered by technological advances and the end of the cold war have made size less important in the determination of a country's viability. What matters most today is not merely the extent of a State's frontiers or the wealth of its resources; the key is the ability of a State to integrate itself as part of a network, and size is irrelevant to this.

The most important international networks are not composed of relations between States. The critical networks are increasingly defined by transnational patterns of relationships between cities, regions and subregions that may only imperfectly fit in with the formal political boundaries of individual States. This again makes a country's size or its resources less important than its ability to access these networks.

It is a fact that many small countries are also among the less developed. This is not surprising given the skewed distribution of international wealth. But the significant point is that to be small is no longer an automatic or fatal disability. It can even be advantageous. This has emboldened many to seek self-determination. And since the same trends have loosened the ability of capitals to control their peripheries, many have succeeded.

Where economics leads, politics inevitably follows. Paradoxically, the political consequence of increasing economic integration of a globalized world economy is a certain loosening of political bonds. We see the effects of this most dramatically in the physical breakup of large and diverse States. But these are exceptional situations. Even when, as is more usual, the formal political boundaries remain intact, the ability of capitals of large and relatively homogeneous States to impose a single direction over all their constituent parts is clearly diminishing. Power is devolving everywhere. This trend is a new international reality.

I do not wish to overstate the argument. So long as sovereignty remains the chief organizing principle of the international system, the exercise of force cannot be discounted in inter-State relations. In war, size is not entirely irrelevant, even though technology has made it something less than the totally decisive factor it was in the past. But war is an extreme condition of international relations. Under normal conditions, the very notions of power and wealth are being redefined and becoming more diffuse, their different dimensions less prone to be focused in just a few world capitals. Hierarchy is still a fact of international life. But what does it really mean to be a "great Power" at the end of the twentieth century? The very phrase today sounds anachronistic.

Bereft of a simple strategic enemy, the post-cold-war foreign policy decision-making of the major Powers is increasingly localized, with domestic politics exercising greater impact. The policies of big Powers in a globalized world, where the economic and other interests of their component parts may be at odds with those of the capital, is becoming less coherent. The very notion of a single national interest is becoming somewhat ambiguous.

All this is making it increasingly difficult for even the biggest countries to routinely bring their power to bear in an interdependent world, where an attack on an opponent may well damage their own interests. Wielding power is becoming more unpredictable even for those who control its greatest instruments. It is not an accident that the big Powers are now somewhat more cautious about exercising power nakedly save in exceptional circumstances and against States that are marginal in the global economy.

I do not mean to suggest that the traditional notion of international relations structured by the interactions of a few big Powers pursuing their individual national interests is entirely obsolete. But it is surely an inadequate description of the world today. The balance of military power is still important. But the strict distinction between high politics and low politics on which the traditional balance of power rested is increasingly blurred.

Now, all this ought to make a consultative, multilateral process more attractive to everyone, and not less attractive. Alas, this is not so. Herein lies the root of the problems of the United Nations. All States, big and small, are adjusting to the changing international system. Indeed they have no choice. But not all are choosing to do so in or through the United Nations. In the United Nations, most of the Powers that we traditionally designate as "great" have reacted with varying degrees of disquiet to these new international realities.

Some, troubled by their decreasing ability to control events even within their own frontiers, are frustrated at their inability to impose their order on what is perceived as a recalcitrant, unfamiliar and intrusive Organization. Others see a threat to their position and prestige. Psychological adjustments are always the most difficult to make. It is thus not surprising that in the United Nations their reflex reaction has generally been a stubborn defence of the status quo.

In discussions on United Nations reform, this simple fact is all too often obscured by the use of arcane and convoluted jargon. I am encouraged, Mr. President, by your reputation for plain speaking, for pulling aside the veil of rhetoric and letting the truth be known. If the United Nations is to be marginalized, let the responsibility clearly be seen to lie where it should. This is most evident in the two most critical and inter-related areas: Security Council reform and finance.

Discussions on Security Council reform have emphasized the Council's size and composition, and in particular the possibility of the admission of new permanent members. There is a wide consensus that in the event that there should be agreement for an increase in the permanent membership, an increase only by industrialised countries would be unacceptable. Many countries agree that Japan and Germany should become new permanent members when consensus is reached on the expansion of the Security Council. Nevertheless, crucial ambiguities remain about whether new permanent members should have the veto. It is especially difficult to imagine major Powers allowing developing countries the veto over their policies. And therefore the stalemate continues.

There is also widespread agreement that Security Council reform should comprise a comprehensive package that would include changes in the working methods of the Security Council in the direction of greater transparency and participation by the membership of the Organization as a whole. But the permanent members have been reluctant to admit any but the most cosmetic of changes to the Security Council's working methods. Yet this is the most critical aspect of Security Council reform for the small States which form the majority of United Nations Members. Small countries do not aspire to permanent membership. But as the principal organ for the maintenance of international peace and security, the Security Council's working methods and its decision-making processes are of vital and legitimate interest to them because they can have direct a impact on their security.

One of the most important and innovative proposals currently on the table is for a reinterpretation of Article 31 of the Charter. This would allow greater participation by non-members in informal Security Council consultations when questions affecting them are being considered. It was extremely discouraging that this modest proposal was categorically rejected by almost every permanent member. Indeed, most refused even to seriously discuss it. It must surely be a basic principle of elementary justice that parties most directly affected by a particular situation should be allowed to present their views directly to the body that will have the most influence over any action that the United Nations may take on that situation. That is in fact the precise reason why Article 31 was included in the Charter in the first place. The intention was clearly to reconcile great-Power leadership with the principle of sovereign equality.

Informal consultations are an innovation that has evolved over the years. All the most important decisions the Security Council takes today are made informally by permanent members. Even the participation of non-permanent members in the real decisions is sometimes more symbolic than significant. Formal meetings are clearly only a choreographed ritual to set the final seal of approval. A reinterpretation of Article 31 would not require an amendment to the Charter, nor would it mean that non-members must participate in all informal consultations. It is therefore no real threat to the authority of the permanent members; it is just an important reform that would undoubtedly enhance the legitimacy, and hence the general acceptability and effectiveness, of Security Council decision-making by bringing the process more in tune with the temper of our times.

I do not wish to be misunderstood. I am not suggesting that the size and composition of the Security Council are unimportant. I understand the merit of the claims for new permanent membership that have been advanced by both industrialized and developing countries. Singapore supports the expansion of the Security Council by up to five new permanent members as part of a comprehensive package that would, among other things, include the consequent adjustment of non-permanent membership to maintain a balanced ratio. But given the profound changes in international relations that are under way, refusing to seriously discuss anything but membership, and even that with critical ambiguities, would be akin to trying to prepare the United Nations for the twenty-first century by applying a nineteenth-century model of great-Power politics to it.

The same resistance to seriously engaging the legitimate interests of the small-State majority of United Nations Members also underlies the financial problems of the United Nations. No one disagrees that the key reason for the cash flow problems of the United Nations is the failure of Member States to pay their dues in full and on time.

There are various reasons why various Member States have not met their legal obligations. Some are poor. But no one has ever suggested that the largest debtor lacks the capacity to pay. Its argument is that its assessed contributions must be reduced because the state of its domestic political consensus does not permit it to sustain its current share of the United Nations budget. The financial burdens, it is consequently argued, ought therefore be more widely spread. I do not lightly dismiss such arguments. They reflect the increasing difficulty of defining and exercising great power that I had earlier called one of the new international realities. I can therefore sympathize with such arguments. But it is not politically acceptable to pick and choose which of the new realities to emphasize when useful, and which to ignore when inconvenient.

Several permanent members have complained of the financial burdens they bear, and have sought to spread them more widely. But there has never been any suggestion by any of the big Powers that their control over critical United Nations expenditure decisions, in particular peacekeeping expenditures, should be proportionately diffused among the majority of small countries which would be expected to take up the financial slack that they want to discard. All the permanent members have been reluctant to allow anything more than the most superficial reexamination of their authority or their relationship with the membership as a whole. Discussions on the role of the General Assembly, which is the only universal and truly representative United Nations organ, have touched mainly on peripheral issues, such as the timing of plenary meetings, the duration of the general debate and the organization of the General Assembly's work.

No one should disagree that to put the United Nations on a sound financial basis ought to be a common endeavour. We certainly do not. But it must really be a collective enterprise involving fair give and take. Political resistance coalesces because it has become clear that the majority are expected to give, while the few only take. Resistance is underscored by the historical fact that the percentage financial contributions of all permanent members, except France, have been steadily reduced over the years while their privileges have not. Resistance is strengthened by the recollection that the United Nations has in fact repeatedly made the financial adjustments asked for, but as yet without any appreciable change in the payment record of the largest contributor.

I do not suggest that this situation is the result of a deliberate policy, since no country takes any pleasure in being unable to pay its dues for whatever reason. But it is politically incongruous and basically unfair to ask the majority to assume a greater share of the financial burdens without at the same time being prepared to allow them any more authority over the most important expenditure decisions. It is untenable to have an almost total separation between the authority for launching peacekeeping operations and how and who should pay for them. The United Nations is the only organization in which a small number of Members run up the largest bills while everybody else pays them.

The stubborn defence of the status quo is all the more striking because no one has asked for anything more than the most modest and incremental adjustments to the relationship between the General Assembly and the Security Council to allow the general membership a little greater participation in and shared responsibility for the decision-making with the greatest budgetary implications.

Singapore is, of course, a small State, and I do not claim to be a disinterested party. As a small State, we are passionately concerned about and vitally engaged in the future of the United Nations. However, our drawing attention to the real obstacles to reform is not just in the interests of small countries alone.

I have suggested that the paradoxical political consequence of a globalized world economy is a certain enhancement of centrifugal tendencies everywhere. A universal international organization to play an integrative role is therefore needed by everyone, big and small, if this is not to lead to conflict. Only the United Nations can play this role, and if it did not exist, we would have had to invent it. But the United Nations can play this integrative role only if the legitimate aspirations of the small States are not ignored and if the majority do not become increasingly alienated from the very Organization that purports to represent them.

Some may dismiss the distance between the rhetoric and the reality of the big-Power attitude towards United Nations reform as simple hypocrisy. I do not accept such a simplistic explanation. I can empathize with the far more complex and wrenching psychological adjustments that the big Powers need to make. The big Powers must summon the political courage to begin this process and embrace the reality of, and necessity for, change. I appeal to them to work with us, the small-State majority, to make this truly a United Nations for all — all — its Members.

Prestige does not depend solely on privilege, and power shared is not power lost. The new international realities are making a zero-sum conception of State power obsolete. A credible United Nations, one that is not regarded as the mere tool of its largest Members, will be a more effective instrument for the foreign policies of all its Members, big and small.

In closing, let me say that my delegation looks forward to close collaboration with you, Sir, and all other members over the next year to advance a collective vision of a truly representative, effective and united United Nations for the twenty-first century.

The President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, His Excellency Mr. H.A.F.M.O. van Mierlo.

Mr. van Mierlo (Netherlands): I join my colleague, Minister Dick Spring of Ireland, who spoke on behalf of the European Union, in congratulating you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly. As a representative with a long and distinguished career in United Nations affairs, you are especially qualified to guide our work in the coming year.

As the present century draws to a close, we need to ask ourselves what shape the United Nations is in. Is it ready to face the world that lies ahead? Is it ready to meet the needs of generations that are still to be born? The realities confronting us today may still be the realities of tomorrow, and they are formidable. We are witnessing increasing poverty, a growing rift between rich and poor, migration, population pressure, dwindling food stocks, hazards to public health and the environment, drugs, terrorism, internal conflicts and wholesale violations of human rights: a daunting litany.

In the face of these realities, to argue in favour of reform of this Organization would be stating the obvious. Of course we need reform. Clearly, the United Nations, over the years, has turned into an institutional jungle where outsiders do not venture, an organization which for that reason alone has lost much of its credibility and which is badly in need of revitalization. We have to reform. There is no alternative.

We need reforms to get back what we have lost; that is, not power, but authority. Power is wielded on many different levels, and by some States more than by others. There is not very much the United Nations can do to influence Member States to make use of their power, and the power of the United Nations itself is rather limited. But what the United Nations was given a lot of 51 years ago, was authority: moral authority as well as legal authority, the kind of authority that comes with speaking on behalf of the world community, with voicing the public conscience and transcending vested interests. Indeed, if this Organization is to approach the future from a position of strength and of confidence, and if we expect the nations of the world to rally behind the flag of the United Nations, its authority needs to be intact. In fact, it needs to be growing.

Well, is it growing? Here a sobering note is due. At this critical juncture in its history, the United Nations is seeing its authority, the one commodity it can never have too much of, compromised and weakened; this is also the one commodity it cannot afford to have too little of. I would wish to highlight some of the manifestations of how the authority of the United Nations is on the wane and offer some prospects for shoring it up again.

First, multilateralism, as such, is under pressure. Many States no longer regard multilateral cooperation as a separate goal of their foreign policy, but instead as one of many policy instruments which they can choose to apply or not to apply in accordance with their national interests. Alterative sources of international leadership have sprung up, and ad hoc coalitions are formed as the need arises. The United Nations is regarded more and more as a vehicle for safeguarding a nation's particular interests, even in the short term, rather than as the preferred avenue for solving pressing world-wide problems. This shopping-mall attitude towards the United Nations is in stark contrast with the lofty principles the founding fathers signed their names to.

Gradual loss of authority is also caused by disappointment and frustration. The United Nations was once established as an ideal form of international cooperation. Particularly after the end of the cold war, expectations rose as never before. For decades, the world had been dominated and the United Nations paralysed by two power blocs at loggerheads. The United Nations could now finally begin to play the role originally laid out for it.

Unfortunately, this did not happen. Success stories such as the United Nations involvement in Namibia, in El Salvador and Mozambique were overshadowed by disappointment over the outcome of Missions Impossible such as Somalia, Rwanda and Bosnia. That the Member States themselves had decided to send the United Nations on those missions could not stem the erosion of authority that came with them.

Frustration has mounted over effectiveness and efficiency, two qualities that have eluded the United Nations for a long time. It would be facile to blame the lack of them on the Secretariat alone. The grinding manner in which the intergovernmental machinery of this Organization works is a major factor as well.

Criticism abounds. The track record of the United Nations is in many ways impressive, to be sure, and even more so when we look at the broad spectrum of the entire United Nations system. Its achievements in the fields of international law, human rights, development, the population crisis, health care, the position of women, labour conditions and disarmament are just random examples. In reality, the list is long. Yet somehow United Nations-bashing has become the craze these days and even a tool of campaign rhetoric, or else it serves to distract attention from internal problems. Nevertheless, the United Nations moral authority is sapped by the real and the imagined and by criticism justified or unjustified.

Then there is the financial situation. From the early days, payment or non-payment of contributions has been indicative of the United Nations approval rating. The level of arrears we are now facing is, however, without precedent. Sadly, it is in large part a reflection of declining confidence and belief in the Organization's potential. The present financial turmoil is not primarily the cause of the United Nations predicament, but rather a consequence of it, a symptom. Of course, empty coffers will lead to less output eventually. Less output would undermine authority even further. Less authority in turn leads to fewer payments, which again would exacerbate the financial crisis. And so we may see the United Nations caught in a downward spiral. The current payment habits of some Member States amount to a self-fulfilling prophecy. Worse, they betray the very principles on which the United Nations was founded. The absence of full, prompt and unconditional payments will further erode the United Nations authority, the same authority those very States helped to bestow on the Organization 50 years ago.

If there is one policy area in which the United Nations has lost much of its authority and stands to loose even more, it is peace and security. Take Burundi. Today, the humanitarian and political situation there is alarming. We are witnessing a creeping genocide. Terror prevails. In the past few months alone, thousands of innocent men, women and children have lost their lives. An explosion of genocide is still a real threat. We cannot allow the occurrence of another disaster such as that which took place in Rwanda in 1994. In that year, we claimed that we could hardly have seen it coming. In the case of Burundi, there will be no such excuse. The writing is clearly on the wall. If we fail once again and a second genocide does take place, the United Nations will suffer its most dramatic loss of authority ever.

What can we do to enhance the effectiveness of the United Nations and hence to help it regain the authority it needs in order to fulfil its mandate? How can we reverse the downward spiral?

If the United Nations is to be effective, the various instruments at the disposal of the international community have to be used in an integrated manner. This holds true particularly in the area of peace and security. In this area, political, military, socio-economic, electoral and humanitarian assistance, as well as reconstruction and development, will have to be applied in harmony. Hence, an integrated approach is the only way effectively to prevent and combat conflicts. The United Nations needs to be on the ground when it matters and where it matters. This is the lesson that can be drawn from recent crises in Africa — such as in Rwanda and Somalia — where the international response to tragic violence became ineffective through lack of coherence.

Preventive diplomacy, on the one hand, and post-conflict peace-building, on the other, require increased attention. More than ever, the United Nations should focus on the prevention of conflicts and, when conflicts do occur nevertheless, on defusing them at an early stage.

When I addressed this Assembly two years ago, I drew attention to the United Nations capability, or rather the lack of it, to respond adequately and in a timely manner to acute situations of conflict. Some progress has been made since then — progress in the form of modest intermediate steps that would in the longer run lead to a United Nations better equipped to maintain peace and security. Today, there is a growing number of countries that take part in the United Nations standby-arrangements system and in the efforts of a group of nations to establish a United Nations high-readiness brigade under this system. The transparency of the Security Council's decision-making concerning peace-operations has improved. A rapidly deployable headquarters will soon be added to the United Nations peace-keeping capacity.

The future of conflict prevention is linked to the United Nations power to combat yet another threat to its authority: impunity. Does the world community actually have sufficient means to bring to justice those guilty of war crimes or crimes against humanity? As the cases of Burundi and Liberia sadly illustrate, the prospect of impunity provides an open invitation to commit crimes without fear of retribution and stands in the way of future reconciliation and reconstruction. The Tribunals on the former Yugoslavia and on Rwanda represent the single most important endeavour of the international community since Nuremberg to adjudicate war crimes and crimes against humanity. We cannot let it fail. Yet the Yugoslavia Tribunal will face a serious problem so long as it cannot gain custody of more of the many people it has indicted. Soon, the present circumstances will erode its authority and, indeed, that of the United Nations as a whole.

My country feels that the establishment of ad hoc Tribunals once again underlines the need for the speedy creation of a permanent international criminal court. Once this Court has been established, it will become even more imperative that those accused of such crimes actually be brought to trial. The United Nations should enhance its capacity to ensure the apprehension, extradition and trial of those so accused.

If there is one area of the United Nations where moral and legal authority play crucial roles, it is that of human rights. Here, the record of the Organization is impressive, but still more can and should be done and new challenges lie in store.

Mr. Wilmot (Ghana), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Increased attention for human rights will increase the moral authority of the United Nations. In this regard, its authority should rest firmly on the Universal Declaration, adopted by this Organization in 1948

> "as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations" (*resolution 217 A (III), eighth preambular para.*) —

in other words, a universal framework. Forty-five years later, in Vienna, the universality of human rights was once again expounded by the United Nations membership as we know it today.

Yet, universality of human rights is under pressure. Ever since Vienna, the discussion of what is called cultural particularities seems to have chipped away at it. Some Governments claim that their nation's human-rights performance cannot be held up to the same standards as other nations' due to differences in their historical, cultural and religious backgrounds.

Let us make no mistake. There are differences in the way people look at human rights in the various regions of the world and the ongoing dialogue in the United Nations would be ill-served if we chose to deny that there were any differences at all. True, religious and ethical values, cultural backgrounds and philosophical convictions should be borne in mind at all times and, by themselves, are even protected by the Universal Declaration. But their link to human rights as such and to the concept of universality is a very particular one. The international community has expressed it nowhere more accurately than in the Platform for Action adopted in Beijing one year ago. As we agreed in Beijing, rather than detracting from the ambit of universality, cultural differences should contribute to the full enjoyment of human rights. The States Members of this Organization agreed in Vienna that, regardless of their political, economic and cultural systems, it is their duty to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Increased emphasis calls for more financial resources. A larger part of the United Nations budget should be devoted to human rights. This, in turn, will enhance the moral authority of the Organization in the eyes of the multitudes who are still deprived of their human rights today. Letting the programme wither away will produce the opposite effect.

The General Assembly, being the only plenary organ of the United Nations, is the most conspicuous. Credibility and authority are very much tied to the Assembly's performance. Sadly, this body sees many of its resolutions ignored. We should vigorously seek to infuse new vitality into the Assembly's proceedings and in the relevance of its achievements.

Two weeks ago, the Assembly effectively lived up to its responsibility by adopting the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty by an overwhelming majority. The adoption of the Treaty by this world body lends authority to the new norm outlawing nuclear testing. My country feels privileged that it was called upon to preside over the negotiations. Adoption of the Treaty contributes to the ultimate elimination of all nuclear weapons, a goal to which my country remains fully committed. We aim for a propitious entry into force. But even in the absence of entry into force, the authority of the United Nations will make it more difficult for any State to act against the Treaty.

Increased attention should be given to those activities of the United Nations which are not of a strictly political nature or concerned with security, namely, the socio-economic aspects and the strengthening of those parts of the United Nations system dealing with such matters as poverty, population, food security, urbanization, equality of women and the environment. These areas are crucial for the future of the world and for the quality of life on this planet. These are also areas where the Organization is especially qualified to identify and debate the problems and where it has set up an impressive array of operational activities. A series of world conferences in recent years has helped to upgrade the authority of the United Nations system. They have set an agenda for the United Nations and the Member States to follow during the coming decades. The World Food Summit in November should do the same. The Summit faces the awesome problem of a world that may have to feed 10 billion people by the time the United Nations is 100 years old.

There is, of course, a risk that expectations have been raised too high once more and that disappointment will lead once more to loss of authority. The United Nations and its Member States have to make sure this does not happen. The United Nations will play a major role in the fields of advocacy, coordination and monitoring. Although the United Nations itself contributes to implementation through its field operations, the Member States bear the primary responsibility for full implementation at the national level. Together, they can succeed in ensuring that the world community reaches the goals it has set for itself.

The authority of the United Nations is at stake. It will not disappear in a clap of thunder. It will die with a whimper. It stands to fade away gradually, without at any time making alarm bells ring, and with it, the Organization may well slide into the margins of the world scene. The United Nations needs a new sense of direction and purpose to become, once again, a beacon for mankind as intended by the authors of the Charter. That requires a sustained effort of all Members of this Organization. There is little time left. Let us use it well.

The Acting President: I now call on the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kuwait, His Excellency Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

Mr. Al-Sabah (Kuwait) (*interpretation from Arabic*): On behalf of the State of Kuwait, it gives me great pleasure to extend to Mr. Razali our sincere congratulations on his election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session.

Given his personal experience and wisdom, we believe that he will be able to guide our discussions efficiently towards a successful conclusion. Since he represents a sister Muslim country, I am particularly pleased to take this opportunity to underscore the firm bonds of brotherhood in Islam between Malaysia and Kuwait.

I am pleased to use this occasion also, to pay tribute to the President of the previous session of the Assembly for his outstanding efforts and contributions during that historic session.

Kuwait views with pride and acknowledgement the impressive performance of the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, especially his leading role in and commitment to the enhancement of the functioning of the world Organization in the areas of global peace, security and development. Mr. Boutros-

Ghali has consistently worked to restructure the United Nations to bring it more into line with the aspirations and expectations attached to it. I want to make special mention of the concrete steps the Secretary-General has taken to curb and rationalize expenditures, to streamline the administrative structure, and to reorganize the Secretariat in order to reflect current realities in the global arena. Hence, Kuwait subscribes to the position adopted by the League of Arab States and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in supporting the Secretary-General's bid to remain on board in order to pursue his reform programme for the revitalization of the United Nations.

Last year, the family of nations observed the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of the United Nations against a backdrop of universal recognition of the wonderful achievements of the United Nations system. The record includes, to cite only a few areas: assistance in the attainment of national independence by many States; the establishment of the principles contained in the Charter, including the right to self-determination; the consolidation of codes of civilized conduct among States; the upholding of justice and equality; and the promotion of economic and social development. Perhaps the most shining success of the United Nations is the peacekeeping operations it carries out in many volatile regions of the world. Such operations have recently assumed a new humanitarian dimension in the form of relief efforts in cases of natural disasters and civil war, and election monitoring.

We view the United Nations as a forum for debating the future of humankind among nations, with a view to promoting the well-being, dignity and basic freedoms of the human person. The ever-increasing complexity of contemporary life in this global village and the ever-changing set of common and pressing issues which continue to emerge require a concerted international effort through the United Nations. By the same token, we must admit that there are gargantuan challenges that continue to face the United Nations, most poignantly the ethnic and regional conflicts that endanger regional stability and the international security system. Other pressing issues include the population explosion, environmental degradation, the water shortage, desertification, the food deficit, the growing gap between the North and the South, the regional arms race, the threat posed by nuclear weapons, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, development concerns, barriers to economic and trade cooperation, the removal of restrictions on free trade and, last but not least, human rights.

To rally all States members of the world community round ways to deal with the fundamental transformations that face the world, we must: believe in the energy, potential and mechanisms of the United nations system to be able to address global concerns in a multilateral fashion; provide enthusiastic financial, political and moral support for the United Nations and identify with its principles and purposes; fully pay assessed contributions to the United Nations budget; and actively pursue a genuinely peaceful policy that recognizes and respects the rights and legitimate concerns of other Member States, with a view to building up a regional order in line with the norms of international behaviour. Accordingly, regional arrangements should be anchored in the established codes of justice and rules of international law and treaties. Here we must ensure respect for human rights, and protect human dignity and the freedom of choice. In this context, human development without discrimination is essential for the overall economic and social development of society. Top priority should be given to this goal rather than to squandering national resources on weaponry. We must face up to terrorism and muster the national will to work collectively on a global level to stamp out the root causes of this plague which afflicts both the weak and the strong, the poor and the rich, for, in the final analysis, terrorism is not susceptible to reason; it stems from bigotry, traumatizes the innocent, resorts to violence and seeks no dialogue.

Against this backdrop, the indisputable fact remains that today's world is interdependent in its security as well as in its general concerns. The affluent few may not be able to live in exclusive comfort while a majority of humankind is marginalized in deprivation and poverty. Here emerges the stark need for a collective conceptual and material effort to develop a common agenda for the benefit of all human beings.

It is from this perspective that we view the significance of the revitalization and refashioning of United Nations organs to keep abreast of the rapid development of international relations. In this context, Kuwait is following closely the ongoing discussions in the Open-Ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council. We had hoped that consensus would have been reached on the restructuring and reform of the Security Council to coincide with the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations last year. Failure to attain that goal so far should not dampen our hopes. Rather, we should redouble our efforts towards that end. Our aim should be a Security

Council whose work and procedures are more transparent. Its resolutions should reflect more faithfully the will of the universal membership of the United Nations. Its composition should be expanded to reflect the recent increase in membership, sovereign equality among States and the equitable geographical distribution of seats among the various regional groups.

Any reform of the Security Council must in the end ensure collective efforts by both members of the Council and other members of the international community to respect and implement its resolutions. The Council should be able to demonstrate its firm resolve against any regime that does not comply with Council resolutions.

A textbook case in point is the just position towards the Iraqi regime adopted by the Council and supported by the international community as a whole. As recently as 23 June 1996, leaders of Arab States, in the final statement issued at the end of the extraordinary Arab Summit in Cairo, urged the Iraqi Government:

> "not to embark on any aggressive policies aimed at provoking its Arab neighbours and to implement in full all the relevant Security Council resolutions and especially those requiring it to take the necessary measures to release all Kuwaiti and third-country prisoners and detainees, to return the property seized and to comply with the compensation mechanism. They regard this as the right way to ensure that the sanctions imposed on Iraq are lifted and the appropriate conditions created for Iraq to resume its role in the inter-Arab regional order." *(A/50/986, appendix, p. 7)*

This statement shows a recognition by the Arab leaders of the nature of the Iraqi regime and their appreciation for the importance of the full implementation of all relevant Security Council resolutions. Hence, Iraq must cooperate sincerely with the International Committee of the Red Cross in order to account for all Kuwaiti and third-country prisoners and detainees, so that the chapter on this human tragedy can be closed. We must note with regret here that the Tripartite Commission, which meets every three months in Geneva, and its Technical Subcommittee, which meets monthly on issues relating to the border between Iraq and Kuwait, have so far gotten nowhere. In point of fact, the Iraqi regime exploits such meetings for propaganda purposes.

I must reiterate here that this question of prisoners and hostages remains a human tragedy precipitated by the Iraqi regime. And it remains a top-priority humanitarian issue for the people and Government of Kuwait.

The Iraqi regime is legally bound to cooperate with the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) in eliminating its arsenal of weapons of mass destruction. UNSCOM's bitter experience shows that the Iraqi regime will not pass up any opportunity to use it for deception, misinformation and the concealment of required data. It even went so far as to block repeatedly the work of UNSCOM inspectors as recently as March, June and August of this year, thus prompting the Security Council to adopt resolution 1060 (1996) in addition to presidential statements issued by way of warning to the Iraqi regime.

Kuwait, keen as it is on ensuring the safety and stability of the region, supports UNSCOM efforts. Indeed, we commend UNSCOM for its resolve and its insistence on the absolute necessity of implementing all provisions relating to the liquidation of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction.

Given the human suffering of the brotherly people of Iraq emanating from the policies of the ruling regime, Kuwait continues to provide humanitarian relief assistance in kind to the Iraqi refugees. We also welcomed the accord reached between Iraq and the United Nations on the implementation of Security Council resolution 986 (1995) as a step forward towards alleviating the suffering of the Iraqi people.

Let me take this occasion to reiterate Kuwait's position that Iraq's unity and territorial integrity must be preserved. In the meantime, we understand — indeed appreciate — all measures taken by the Coalition States in order to ensure the full implementation by Iraq of all relevant Security Council resolutions. The essence and thrust of these resolutions is the evolution of a regional order anchored in the established principles of justice and stability, the rule of law, observance of the norms of international behaviour, and respect for international treaties, at the core of which is the Charter of the United Nations.

In view of Kuwait's concern for peace and security in the Arabian Gulf region, and by virtue of our close relations with our sister State, the United Arab Emirates, and with our friendly neighbour, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Kuwait associates itself with the position of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) regarding the issue of the islands. Kuwait calls upon the two parties to continue their negotiations in a bid to reach a just and peaceful settlement through dialogue.

On another regional matter, Kuwait fully supports the sister State of Bahrain in the recent measures it took to combat terrorism with a view to consolidating its security and stability. Our position is in harmony with the principle that the GCC member States have a common destiny, and their security and stability are therefore indivisible.

Kuwait has been following with grave concern the stalling of the Middle East peace process following the election of a new Government in Israel, which adopted a series of positions that contradict the arrangements worked out in Madrid, primarily the land-for-peace formula and the implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) towards a comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

The recent Cairo summit document underscored the adherence by the Arab States to the peace process, in order to achieve the ultimate goal of a just and comprehensive peace, as a strategic option under the umbrella of international law. The Arab position requires a matching commitment by Israel to work in a sincere and forthright fashion all the way through until the overall peace process is completed. This must include the restoration of rights and the return of occupied territories, as well as ensuring security and a strategic balance of all States of the region, in accordance with the principles laid down in Madrid.

For the record, let me recall in this context that Kuwait put the question of Palestine among its top concerns. In point of fact, that issue has been central to our relations with other members of the international community. We have channelled enormous effort and resources into this cause, since Kuwait has always believed that Israel has not recognized the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination and statehood — let alone the fact that it has seized Palestinian territory in total disregard of United Nations resolutions and by using force as a means of imposing *faits accomplis*. We demand that the Israeli Government stop its settlement activities in the Palestinian territories, especially in the Holy City of Jerusalem, and that it cease forthwith all changes to its Arab character and legal status. The refugee problem must also be resolved according to United Nations resolutions. Finally, a Palestinian state must be established with Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with the will of the Palestinian people.

In this context, we condemn the steps taken by Israel in commissioning and excavating a tunnel under the western wall of the Al-Aqsa Mosque. This constitutes a desecration of that holy site and is a provocation to the people of Palestine — indeed to all Arabs and Muslims throughout the world. The use of great force and violence by Israel has left many people dead or wounded. We demand that Israel put an immediate end to these practices and that it fulfil its obligations to preserve the Arabic and Islamic character of these holy places.

Lasting and comprehensive peace requires mutual accommodation of the parties' rights, compliance with accords concluded, action in good faith, avoidance of provocative acts, and long-term vision — all with a view not to inflict injury on any major party to the peace equation.

Withdrawal by Israel from the Golan is a litmus test of its good intentions to achieve a just and balanced peace. Therefore, Kuwait supports Syria's position that negotiations should resume from the point at which they ceased, in view of the fact that the peace process is a continuum that should not stop before reaching its ultimate destination.

Kuwait also supports Lebanon in its legitimate insistence that Israel must fulfil all provisions of Security Council resolution 425 (1978), under which Israel must withdraw fully and unconditionally from all Lebanese territory under occupation.

We believe that, in the final analysis, world peace is indivisible and that consequently, the question of global security has worldwide ramifications. Hence we think that the issues of ethnic strife and civil war should remain on the international agenda. Thus, we welcome the peaceful measures taken thus far in the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina with a view to bringing that tragedy to an end while ensuring that the people of that Republic are accorded their legitimate rights. We also welcome the outcome of the recently held elections there and congratulate President Alija Izetbegović on the well-deserved confidence placed in him.

We also call upon the international community to pursue its efforts towards ending the current tragedies that afflict Somalia, Afghanistan and Burundi. In the same vein, we hope that the peoples of those countries will be responsive to the efforts of the international community.

Kuwait notes with satisfaction the success of the United Nations earlier this month in the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), which is the culmination of a long-standing universal effort and of hopes for a safer world. Indeed, the CTBT represents an essential step forward on the path towards the elimination of nuclear weapons.

Cooperation among member States of the international community in the economic and trade spheres has engendered a welcome openness following the conclusion of the world free trade agreement. We hope that this accord will expand the volume of the developing countries' exports to the world markets. Kuwait was in the vanguard of advocating the removal of trade barriers simply because we believe that, in the context of an interdependent globe, collective political security cannot be isolated from the economic concerns of nations. Against this background, we welcome the steps already taken by some developing countries to readjust their economic approaches towards genuine openness and the adoption of free-market policies. In our view, this type of restructuring will help attract foreign investments and accelerate the transfer of technology, which, in the end, will foster international economic relations in terms of generating a freer cash flow, a better investment environment and an increase in joint ventures.

Kuwait believes in the need to harness human energies to narrow the gaps that exist among nations, based on a common understanding of the tenets that underpin world security and economic well-being. We also believe that dialogue and the tolerant exchange of views, coupled with sincere and determined joint action, will lay a solid foundation for improved international relations. Under this scenario, the good forces will combine to neutralize the evil ones; the "haves" and the "have-nots" might stand a better chance of interacting beneficially; reason and prudence will reign supreme, while the outlaws, saboteurs and vicious tyrants will continue to lose ground. In the end, living conditions will improve under a new world order based on the principles of justice, which promote peace and security for all.

The Acting President: I now call on the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan, His Excellency Mr. Boris Shihmuradov.

Mr. Shihmuradov (Turkmenistan): Allow me, first of all, to congratulate Mr. Razali Ismail, as a representative of a State with which Turkmenistan has exceptionally warm relations, on the occasion of his election to this high post. I should like also to express confidence that his vast diplomatic experience in close association with the United Nations will enable him to effectively guide the work of the current session, which is called upon to accomplish a number of historic objectives.

The President's opening statement reaffirms that our expectations will come true. Here, I should like to express our appreciation to Mr. Freitas do Amaral for his work during the preceding session of the General Assembly, which has become an integral part of Turkmenistan's history by dint of its unanimous adoption of the resolution on the permanent neutrality of my country. Speaking from this rostrum on the eve of the adoption of that resolution, His Excellency Saparmurad Niyazov, President of Turkmenistan, emphasized that Turkmenistan would take all the necessary steps to reaffirm its complete adherence to the principles of the United Nations by making a constructive contribution to the stabilization of the situation in our strife-torn region, by peace-building and by serving the interests of cooperation within our region and at the inter-regional level. During the past year, Turkmenistan has taken steps to achieve this goal by playing host to three rounds of talks between Tajik factions in Ashgabat, by providing assistance to the Mission of the Secretary-General's special envoy for Afghanistan, and by hosting a number of major international forums.

Having entered the world community of nations as an independent State on the eve of the twenty-first century, Turkmenistan, like other countries, has found itself facing the need to accept the challenge of the times so typical of the turn of centuries. That is why we have focused our efforts on the international arena, striving to become part of the worldwide process with its new trends towards unity based on national statehood and sovereignty. A policy of constructive neutrality has become our response to the challenge of the epoch.

Turkmenistan is an Asian country whose destiny has been to become one of the actors involved in the all-European process. We view this factor as a unique chance to cooperate with the Europeans within the framework of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the European Union and other organizations, and to promote better understanding and the improvement of North-South cooperation.

Today the international community confronts problems requiring new approaches and innovative decisions, profound analysis and forecasting. In this respect, we would like to propose that, under the auspices of the United Nations, an international centre for political studies be established in Turkmenistan that would carry out studies on the political and economic situation in our region. The work of the centre should correspond to the new geopolitical realities, and the centre should have the task of elaborating specific strategic recommendations in the interests of global peace and security. It is no secret that analysing a situation from a distance often leads to incorrect conclusions and projections.

Confrontation between blocs has become a thing of the past. Today geo-economic regions have emerged as the main actors in the political arena. Classifying States according to their size and might, which infringes on the interests of small and medium-size States, has become obsolete. Within the existing system of international relations, all States should be able to structure themselves within the framework of universally accepted rules, but they should do so according to their own tenets and principles. It is in this context that we support the initiatives aimed at introducing appropriate changes in the functioning of the United Nations, its bodies and sister organizations.

The United Nations Charter stipulates that the Security Council bears primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. We share the view that today the notion of security has undergone a radical transformation and includes an entire set of equally important political, economic, environmental, social, military and other components. Proceeding from this assumption, we endorse the proposal that membership of this main body of the United Nations should be enlarged, within reasonable limits, so that it may ensure that this international process is manageable and controllable. Of equal importance is the question of balanced and adequate representation in the Security Council of States from both the North and the South.

Today's Turkmenistan is a country with a transitional economy undergoing profound social and political changes. In this respect, we hope that "An Agenda for Development" will be finalized during the current session, which will help to establish a system of priorities and assistance to States pursuing such national development programmes. It is hardly possible to overestimate the role of the United Nations, because it is precisely this mechanism that should ensure the utmost objectivity and tolerance towards such processes. Newly independent States did not emerge out of a vacuum. Each one possesses its own specific features, unique national and geographic characteristics, historical ties and psychological patterns. Each one has the right to choose its own model of development and State system.

Proceeding from this assumption, we support the view that diversity is integral to the world. However, though all States are subject to international law, the aspirations of all for development and prosperity cannot be programmed according to a single standard or world view. The main challenge of the twenty-first century is to ensure that all Members of the United Nations can look at one another from the point of view of unity in diversity. We are therefore grateful to the United Nations and to States possessing global political and economic potential for their support and understanding.

Turkmenistan possesses colossal natural resources. It has one of the richest deposits of hydrocarbons in the world — I refer to the Caspian basin as well as to other areas of my country. One of the major tasks facing us is the establishment of a pipeline infrastructure that, in conjunction with the existing system, will ensure supply of our gas to Europe and Asia. We are glad that Turkmenistan's interests as an exporter coincide with the interests of European and Asian consumers. We are happy that neighbouring countries — Iran, Afghanistan, Russia, Turkey, Pakistan, Uzbekistan and Kazakstan — do not have any differences with respect to this issue.

In this context I would like to touch on several issues relating to the Caspian Sea. Turkmenistan, like all littoral States, is concerned about its future and the prospects for its resources. We believe that there is no place for unilateral decisions or dictates on this issue. What is required is the establishment of a system of full trust and interaction among the Caspian Sea States for the sake of the common interests and prosperity of each individual State. The forthcoming Conference of Foreign Ministers of the Caspian States to be held in Ashgabat will serve as the forum for discussion of all those problems and will prepare a platform for a Caspian summit meeting.

Turkmenistan is opposed to any military activity in the Caspian Sea. It wishes to ensure a regime of free navigation with respect to the national borders of every littoral State. The wealth of the Caspian Sea, its unique biological and mineral structure and fragile ecological system call for a comprehensive and balanced approach, free from short-term profit or political advantage. We do not doubt that all Caspian Sea States will be able to find the best alternative on the basis of common sense and respect for the interests of each country involved in the name of the common goal of peace and security.

There is one area of cooperation with the United Nations in which Turkmenistan has a special interest: the struggle against drug distribution and trafficking. Turkmenistan is waging a relentless fight against this evil and has established a State coordination commission. At the beginning of this year Turkmenistan joined the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, the 1971 Convention on Psychotropic Substances and the 1988 United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances. Turkmenistan attaches great importance to its cooperation with the United Nations International Drug Control Programme, and has signed a bilateral agreement with it. In May 1996 Turkmenistan, together with other countries of Central Asia, and in cooperation with the United Nations International Drug Control Programme, signed a memorandum on regional cooperation concerning control of illegal production, trafficking and abuse of narcotic drugs. We need to make extraordinary efforts in order to control the situation, roll back the spiral of evil and reverse the situation whereby the problem of drugs grows in proportion to the efforts made to combat it.

Turkmenistan is actively cooperating with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the United Nations in developing democratic processes so as to bring up new generations free from the old psychological stereotypes and doubtful ideological values. Democracy, human rights, people's rights to property and legal protection are all universal notions. However, it is not enough simply to understand their relevance; it is necessary to implement them in real life once and for all. What we need is patience and time to allow such understanding to be translated into practical reality. That is why Turkmenistan has created an institute for democracy, human rights and statehood development, which is called upon to develop its own model of a democratic society, relying on the best European and Asian experiences and drawing on the knowledge of international experts. One does not have to be a specialist in order to understand that, no matter how perfect a model proposed from outside may seem, it might not be effective when applied to a traditional Oriental society such as exists in Turkmenistan, a country that has inherited values from ancient civilizations and the culture of Islam. There is also a specific mentality among its people, who have for centuries fought for their survival and have eventually acquired the chance to be independent and have their own national identity.

The agenda of the current session includes an item dealing with the development of cooperation between the United Nations and its bodies and the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO). During the last summit of that organization, which was held in May 1996 in the capital of Turkmenistan, my country assumed the presidency for the next two-year period, and it intends to exert every effort necessary to implement the large-scale programmes of this organization, which now comprises 10 countries.

The ECO is a purely economic organization with no political strings attached. It members share a common view on this matter. Similarly, we believe that only the acceleration of economic development and the improvement of cooperation among States can bring well-being and prosperity to the peoples of the region. However, a number of political preconditions are indispensable for developing economic interaction so that it can be effective and fruitful. I believe that a climate of political trust is the first requirement. If such a climate becomes a constant factor in our relations, it will contribute to the advancement of new, bold initiatives and specific projects. To put it plainly, we must profess a philosophy of mutual understanding and trust. It is only under such conditions that our projects can be successfully implemented. That is especially important because conflict situations persist in the ECO region, in Tajikistan and Afghanistan. Turkmenistan firmly believes that these two ancient and wise peoples are capable of overcoming the syndrome of lingering mistrust and difference. We fully support the initiative of the United Nations and the efforts of neighbouring countries aimed at a peaceful settlement.

As for Afghanistan, we consider it important that the conflict there has moved from being in a category of forgotten conflicts to the centre of international efforts. By conducting constant consultations with the leaders of neighbouring countries and the Secretary-General, the President of Turkmenistan, Saparmurat Niyazov, has expressed Turkmenistan's readiness to take an active part in the search for an Afghan settlement. The fate of many global economic projects hinges on peace in Afghanistan, in particular the supply of energy resources to actively developing energy markets in Asia.

Next month Turkmenistan will celebrate the fifth anniversary of its independence. Today we can discern more clearly the perspectives and understand better in what areas we should develop cooperation with foreign partners. We can clearly see and evaluate the situation at home, in the region and the rest of the world. Accumulated experience enables us to say that Turkmenistan has found its place in the international community, both politically and economically. By consistently and progressively moving towards the democratization of our society and the establishment of market mechanisms in the economy, our State is becoming integrated into the worldwide process. By closely interacting with foreign partners and pursuing a vigorous foreign policy, we are confident that these tasks will be implemented promptly and efficiently.

The meeting rose at 5.50 p.m.

United Nations A/51/PV.12

General Assembly

Fifty-first Session

Official Records

12th plenary meeting
Friday, 27 September 1996, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Razali Ismail . . . . (Malaysia)

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda item 9 *(continued)*

General debate

The President: I call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs and External Trade of Iceland, His Excellency Mr. Halldór Ásgrímsson.

Mr. Ásgrímsson (Iceland): May I congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly and pledge to you the full support of my delegation.

During the past fiftieth-anniversary year, the States Members of the United Nations have reaffirmed their support for the fundamental purposes and principles of the Organization. The momentum created by the anniversary must now be used to adapt the Organization to new realities. To this end, both structural and financial reforms must be undertaken, setting priorities and reallocating limited resources. But the point of the exercise must not be simple cost-cutting. What we need above all is a stronger, not a weaker, Organization, better capable of dealing with the enormous global challenges of the twenty-first century.

There is no alternative to the United Nations. The further evolution of the Organization is therefore inevitable. But the Organization will not evolve in a commonly acceptable direction under duress. Agreement on and implementation of necessary reforms will only be achieved in a spirit of dialogue and accommodation.

This applies not least to the ongoing work to adapt the Security Council. Changes in its composition and working methods should remain a priority. The Council must better reflect political and economic realities in a rapidly changing world. Its continued effectiveness depends on a constructive contribution by all its members, as well as on equitable representation and manageable size. There should be a geographically balanced expansion of seats in both the permanent and non-permanent categories, including permanent seats for Germany and Japan. We should ensure that small and medium-sized States have the possibility to be represented in the Council.

The United Nations system must be strengthened further in the fields of economic and social policy and development. The revitalization of the Economic and Social Council is important if the Council is to serve as an important venue for coordination and policy-making on issues which affect our daily existence. Iceland is a candidate for election to the Economic and Social Council for the next term and is prepared to contribute constructively to the work of the Council and to the debate on its future.

Mr. Baumanis (Latvia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The signing of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) this week will be remembered as an important step towards limiting the nuclear-arms race and setting us on the path of genuine nuclear disarmament. I

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one month of the date of the meeting*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

would like to urge Member countries to sign and ratify the Treaty as soon as possible.

The proliferation of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction is of continuous concern to the international community. Unconditional and universal adherence to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the chemical weapons and biological weapons Conventions, and now the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is a critical step towards eliminating weapons that threaten life on our planet.

But the horrors associated with weapons of mass destruction must not blind us to the widespread suffering caused by increasingly destructive conventional arms. Landmines especially are a growing menace, indiscriminately maiming and killing innocents no less than combatants. Iceland strongly supports a comprehensive ban on the use, production and export of anti-personnel landmines.

In the aftermath of the cold war, it has become increasingly clear how prolonged regional conflicts can have serious international implications. Events in Iraq are only the most recent example. Such conflicts need to be addressed in a comprehensive manner by the United Nations. In addition to the important function of the Security Council, the wider United Nations system should be employed more actively to prevent armed conflicts as well as to assist in the reconstruction of societies emerging from war. Vigilance towards threats or acts of aggression which can erode regional or international stability is a necessary part of such preventive activity. International terrorism is aggression by unconventional means. Its victims are mainly civilians. The use or sanction of terrorism by individual States is unacceptable. The action of the international community should properly reflect the universal abhorrence of alliances between terrorists and individual States.

The sinister scheming of terrorists and organized crime is of growing concern, not least since it is frequently based on illicit drug trafficking. The United Nations can do much to enhance international cooperation in crime prevention and in the suppression of drug trafficking across national boundaries. Iceland supports the holding of a special session of the General Assembly in 1998 devoted to drug control.

The international community must move swiftly to enhance respect for relevant human rights instruments in areas of conflict. The establishment of international war crimes tribunals is a step in the right direction, provided they receive the cooperation necessary to fulfil their mandate from all parties concerned.

Through a series of international conferences, the Organization has, during the past few years, addressed the most important issues facing humankind. These conferences have highlighted both the enormity of our task and the complex interrelationship between the various global issues we are often called upon to deal with, be they absolute poverty, environmental degradation, overpopulation, human rights abuses or social injustice. Having concluded this unprecedented series of conferences with the second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements in Istanbul last June, we owe it to future generations to join hands and spare no effort to implement the decisions reached.

Universal human rights are the foundation on which we base the work of the United Nations. This includes the safeguarding of gender equality and the rights of the most vulnerable groups in society: the poor and the disabled. Children are increasingly the target of atrocities in war and of human rights violations. Six years after the World Summit for Children we still must do a better job of honouring our commitments to children. In this context, Iceland welcomes in particular the recommendations of the Stockholm World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and wishes to see them followed up as soon as possible.

Hunger and malnutrition are shameful phenomena on the eve of the twenty-first century. With the resources at its disposal, the international community should be able to provide food security for the whole of mankind. The forthcoming World Food Summit will hopefully secure a commitment at the highest political level to rapidly achieve this objective.

As a country owing its survival and prosperity to the harvesting of living marine resources, Iceland has consistently underlined the potential of the oceans as a major source of nutrition. Icelandic fisheries have developed experience and technology which could benefit others. The Government of Iceland is prepared to facilitate international cooperation in this field. Iceland has contributed actively to the establishment of international law governing the protection and sustainable utilization of the oceans. The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea has already proven to be a historic success in the field of international law and remains among the greatest achievements of the United Nations.

The seas and the ocean floors are the depositories of enormous resources. The agreement of the international community on an extensive legal framework on this subject is therefore a major accomplishment. The Convention offers the prospect of resolving serious conflicts on the uses of the seas which could be detrimental to international cooperation. The Convention has already provided the basis for further agreements, such as the recently concluded Agreement relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks.

Iceland has actively participated in the adoption of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities. Pollution of this sort is responsible for over 80 per cent of all marine pollution. In order to facilitate the implementation of the Programme, a draft resolution on institutional arrangements will be addressed by the General Assembly at this session.

However, major challenges remain. Controlling the use of persistent organic pollutants needs to be addressed. Iceland welcomes the proposal put forward within the United Nations Environment Programme to establish an international committee in 1997 with the aim of reaching a global agreement on this question.

This year, Iceland celebrates the fiftieth anniversary of its membership in the United Nations. We have strongly emphasized constructive participation. This reflects our belief in the importance of multilateral cooperation for smaller States and, in particular, in the hopes and aspirations attached to the world Organization.

The United Nations is ideally capable of achievements in specific areas which are beyond the reach of national or regional authorities. However, it will never attain the capacity to meet all expectations. As Member States debate reforms, I would like to emphasize the importance of setting priorities and making them well known. The shaping of a new United Nations suited for the twenty-first century must be complemented by vigorous information efforts with the aim of ensuring continued public confidence and support.

The Acting President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland, Her Excellency Ms. Tarja Kaarina Halonen.

Ms. Halonen (Finland): Let me offer Ambassador Razali my sincerest congratulation on his election as President of the General Assembly. This session will address many difficult and important questions. I am confident that under his experienced and wise leadership we shall achieve good and constructive results. I should also like to express the thanks and appreciation of my Government to the Secretary-General and to the many dedicated women and men in the Secretariat.

Let me refer to the statement made by the Deputy Prime Minister of Ireland on behalf of the European Union. My Government fully endorses that statement.

As the United Nations enters its fifty-first year, one conclusion is self-evident: questions of peace, development and human rights can no longer be neatly separated. They interact, and nowhere more so than at the United Nations.

Let me begin with human rights. There can be no sustainable peace in societies where the human rights of individuals are not respected or where their democratic aspirations are denied. Widespread violations of human rights, including the rights of minorities, breed instability and conflict. The United Nations is then, often too late, called upon to deal with them. There can be no sustainable development in societies where economic and social rights, as well as political rights, are flouted. Authoritarian rule is no answer to poverty or environmental degradation. The universality of human rights cannot be questioned. True, civilizations differ; societies differ. But that does not mean that cultural, religious, ideological or any other factors can be invoked as legitimate justifications for human rights violations. To do so is to deny the inherent equality of human beings.

But adherence to general principles is not enough. The litmus test is, of course, practice. Here at the United Nations we must ask ourselves what we can do together to promote respect for human rights. I see at least three areas where the General Assembly can and should act.

First, we must see to it that the United Nations mechanisms that have been created to promote and monitor respect for human rights are not impaired through lack of funds. The High Commissioner for Human Rights, his special rapporteurs and the human rights treaty bodies within the United Nations system are entitled to our support. The General Assembly should insist on the necessary funding.

Secondly, we must help establish, in accordance with the conclusions of the Preparatory Committee, a permanent international criminal court to deal with flagrant violations of international humanitarian law and human rights. I do not have to belabour the reasons why. One look at Rwanda or the former Yugoslavia is enough.

Thirdly, we must ensure sustained and integrated follow-up of the United Nations conferences from Vienna to Istanbul, so as to implement fully the agreed programmes of action. Nationally, Governments must commit the resources necessary to make the agreed actions a reality. In the case of the Vienna and Beijing Conferences in particular, full and equal enjoyment of human rights by all women everywhere must be the first goal towards which the United Nations and all Governments must aspire.

In Finland, women gained full political rights — the right to vote and, just as important, the right to be eligible for Parliament — as early as 1906; that is, 90 years ago. Finland thus became the very first country in the world where this was made possible. We have come a long way since then, but we still need to do better until, finally, women are just as equally empowered in Finnish society as men. I know that the same is true to varying degrees in other countries too.

Children, whether girls or boys, are full-fledged subjects of human rights. Almost universal ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child has been achieved. States Parties must now ensure universal implementation too. The message from the recent Stockholm World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children was clear: full implementation of children's rights is also the best guarantee against sexual exploitation. The United Nations must now, along with Governments, follow up the commitments of Stockholm, and with vigour.

Even the most democratic societies are vulnerable to conflicts, even to armed ones. We should therefore do our utmost to prevent them and, to this end, make full use of all means available to the international community.

Finland believes in United Nations peacekeeping. We have participated for 40 years and stand ready to continue. The sheer complexity of modern-day conflicts has turned United Nations thinking towards comprehensive peace operations. Peacekeeping must be seen as a part of a comprehensive peace process. We welcome this approach. The civilian and military elements of a peace operation should operate in close cooperation. Artificial barriers separating the two should be eliminated right at the outset in devising the mandate for an operation. It is also important that peace operations be linked with longer-term peace-building efforts to promote stability and sustainable human development.

Lessons have been learned the hard way in the past few years. United Nations peacekeepers are not suited for peace enforcement. That job should and can be entrusted by the Security Council to others — whether regional organizations or other outside ad hoc coalitions — if necessary. But these are exceptional cases. For the vast majority of conflicts, the United Nations will be the one called upon for peacekeeping. Even if the United Nations must be able to say no on occasions, the world Organization cannot shirk its responsibility. Moreover, when the United Nations acts, it should act on time and with the support of its members, including funding.

The President returned to the Chair.

Time is of the essence in responding to crises. Further development of the existing standby arrangements with Member States is the most practical way to enhance the rapid-reaction capability of the Organization. Therefore, Finland strongly supports the establishment of a rapidly deployable headquarters unit at the United Nations as soon as possible.

Prevention, naturally, is better than cure. In peacekeeping as well, preventive deployment is an innovation that is working right now in The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Finland is convinced that the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force (UNPREDEP) operation is making a crucial contribution to stability in the whole region. It is a full-fledged operation in preventive diplomacy encompassing good offices, monitoring and human and institutional development, as well as troop deployment. That contribution, based on the present mandate, should continue until peace and stability in the whole region are better assured.

This is the year of the nuclear-test ban. That is what the General Assembly demanded a year ago, and that is what the vast majority of the world's nations has now agreed. I was proud to sign the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty for my country. That Treaty will strengthen the security of all of us, without exception. Banning nuclear-test explosions is a goal to which the international community has been committed for decades.

The Treaty accomplishes that goal. At the same time, the Treaty is a step towards the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons.

However, focusing on nuclear weapons is not enough. We also need to focus on weapons that maim and kill people today. Those weapons are conventional weapons, particularly landmines, other small arms and light weapons.

The excessive accumulation and proliferation of small arms threaten to destabilize communities, countries and entire regions. A United Nations expert panel, on which my country is represented, is looking into the problem right now. Finland, for one, expects concrete recommendations on how to deal with this clear and present danger nationally, regionally and through the United Nations.

The indiscriminate use of anti-personnel landmines is the most visible manifestation of the small-arms emergency. When they finally achieve peace, societies already ravaged by years of war are severely hampered in their reconstruction efforts by landmines that have been indiscriminately sown by the millions. A concerted international effort, led by the United Nations, is needed to assist in mine clearance. Demining should also be made an integral part of peacekeeping mandates, as was recently suggested by Germany and endorsed by the Security Council.

It is increasingly clear, however, that in the end only a prohibition of inhumane and indiscriminate landmine use can bring a real solution. To be effective, such a solution must be legally binding, global and verifiable. As the first step, all States should adhere to and abide by the significantly strengthened landmine Protocol to the Convention on conventional weapons. I find it very hard to understand why two out of three United Nations Member States continue to remain outside that Convention.

As a concurrent step Finland proposes the initiation of global negotiations on a treaty banning anti-personnel landmines altogether. A natural forum for such negotiations would be the single negotiating body for disarmament that the international community has at its disposal, namely, the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva.

Finland will work actively for the inclusion of a ban on anti-personnel landmines in the negotiating agenda of the Conference on Disarmament when the Conference reconvenes in January.

In assisting in the creation of conditions of stability and well-being, the United Nations has effective economic and social tools at its disposal. A review of how the United Nations does its business in this field is under way. The approval in May of the resolution on restructuring and revitalization of some areas in the Economic and Social Council sector was an encouraging sign.

The yardstick in measuring United Nations impact on development should be how the Organization has been able to alleviate poverty and contribute to the improvement of the quality of life. The first priority now, as we see it, should be to assess the impact of the development activities of the United Nations system at the country level. We were pleased to note that last year the General Assembly initiated a process to that effect.

I have two remarks in this regard. First, it is necessary to concentrate United Nations development activities on the poorest countries and the most vulnerable groups of society. Secondly, better integration of the United Nations at the country level would enhance efficiency. It would promote closer coordination between development activities, on the one hand, and humanitarian and peacekeeping activities on the other.

The commitments made at recent United Nations conferences provide a comprehensive agenda for follow-up. One of the conferences, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, will be prominently present at this fifty-first session of the General Assembly. That Conference is a promising example of the capabilities of the United Nations. It has made global environmental concerns an everyday reality for all of us. The follow-up session next year will afford a unique opportunity to assess progress and review priorities.

In my view, one of the emerging priorities would be a political commitment at the global level for sustainable forest management. Finland attaches great importance to the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests, which has been established and which expects to submit concrete action-oriented recommendations to the special session.

Before concluding my statement, I wish to refer to the statement issued by the Presidency of the European Union yesterday regarding the killings and violent incidents in the West Bank and Gaza. I want to state that my Government fully endorses that statement. On behalf of the Government of Finland, I appeal to the parties concerned to take every measure to restore calm and refrain from acts of violence and provocation. We also urge the parties to re-engage the peace process, which had already achieved such promising results.

In view of the Security Council's primary role in the maintenance of international peace and security, the reform of the Council is of particular urgency. The discussions on this subject during the fiftieth session were thorough and useful. Convergence of views emerged on many important issues, yet on others, differences still remain. I believe that the time is now ripe to take a step forward and engage in real negotiations on a comprehensive reform of the Council.

Meanwhile, in a few weeks we shall elect new non-permanent members to the present Security Council. As is well known, the five Nordic Countries give their full support to Sweden. I am confident that the other Member States will also recognize the merits of our neighbouring country.

The Deputy Prime Minister of Ireland, Mr. Dick Spring, when speaking on behalf of the European Union, underlined the obligation of all Member States to pay their arrears and their assessed contributions to the United Nations. Finland having been the first Member State to pay in full, on time and without conditions its assessed contribution to the regular budget of the United Nations in 1996, I feel it both my right and my duty to reiterate that appeal.

The United Nations, we agree, needs renewed focus and streamlining. Let us now find the determination and will to proceed with the necessary reform.

Address by Dato' Seri Mahathir Mohamad, Prime Minister of Malaysia

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of Malaysia.

Dato' Seri Mahathir Mohamad, Prime Minister of Malaysia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming the Prime Minister of Malaysia, His Excellency Dato' Seri Mahathir Mohamad, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Mahathir (Malaysia): I am happy to acknowledge a Malaysian as the President of the General Assembly, a first for Malaysia. We are thankful to all Member States for their support, especially the members of the Asian Group, which endorsed Malaysia's candidature early.

I would like to think that the selection has to do with Malaysia's efforts and involvement, with the United Nations and globally. Within three years of Malaysia's independence, we were involved in United Nations peacekeeping operations in the Congo. Today in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Malaysia is perhaps the only developing country participating in the peacekeeping forces led by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), paying in full the cost of our involvement. Malaysia will continue to participate in international activities, United Nations-sponsored or otherwise, combining altruism with enlightened self-interest.

This time last year, there was much celebration as the United Nations attained its fiftieth year. Amid the celebrations extolling the achievements of the United Nations, there were serious concerns expressed about the relevance and effectiveness of this Organization and the need for democratic reforms so that the United Nations could better fulfil the purposes and principles of the Charter. The fiftieth anniversary came and went and, despite the extravaganza, very little has been achieved.

The Organization itself remains far removed from the aspirations of the peoples of the United Nations, which it is supposed to promote and protect. Hopefully, the tragedy of Bosnia and Herzegovina will, with international help, be on the mend, but Palestine's hopes and aspirations have been undermined by the new Israeli Government, which is backed, unfortunately, by some Western Powers, and is backtracking on painfully negotiated agreements. At this moment, a rash decision by Israel not only imperils further the peace process, with lives being lost, but can inflame and outrage Muslim States and Muslim society if the sanctity of the Al-Aqsa Mosque is defiled. In Africa, Somalia, Rwanda and Liberia remain on the razor's edge of survival, and Burundi awaits United Nations and regional initiatives to avoid a catastrophe. And there are countries such as Afghanistan, victims of the cold war, abandoned by the major Powers, needing help to reconstruct and overcome the destruction wrought by war. And what will be the fate of tiny Chechnya and its valiant people, facing the full onslaught of mighty Russia?

While some developing countries become fragmented and marginalized, the process of accruing power and benefits continues with the major countries, aided by their control of the Security Council, their monopoly on nuclear power and their economic high ground. One sees various twists and turns, double standards and selectivity, as the dictates of domestic politics overrule justice and humanitarianism in international affairs. Commitment to multilateralism is so qualified and investment in the United Nations so tentative that common needs have often been sacrificed.

Now, as the General Assembly begins its fifty-first session, we urge again that the international community work collectively for substantial change, reflecting a more equitable sharing of political and economic power. This call for reform is made even more urgent when we consider that the premises by which international relations are conducted today continue to perpetuate a grossly unjust system.

The systematic abuse of power by the major countries has continued. They apply selective sanctions and double standards on the developing world to promote their narrow national interests. Clearly disregarding multilateralism, with its inherent qualities of mutual respect and shared interests, the North continues its vice-like grip on all spheres of international activity, including politics, international trade, development, the environment and the media to name a few.

Elitism exercised by the major countries is frequently cloaked in the guise of globalism or of serving the common interests of nations. However even a cursory examination of this brand of globalism reveals it to be sanctimonious, if not hypocritical. For example, under the pretext of safeguarding international peace and security, the nuclear-weapon States maintain their right to destroy, or threaten to destroy, all life on this planet. Yet these countries deny others even the right to use conventional weapons for self-defence.

Malaysia deeply regrets the lack of a consensus on the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty but welcomes its subsequent adoption at the fiftieth session of the General Assembly. We worry about nuclear aspirations in our region and in Israel. To a large extent, the refusal of the nuclear-weapon States to adopt a timetable for nuclear disarmament is responsible for this situation and seriously flaws the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Malaysia is encouraged by the recent International Court of Justice Advisory Opinion on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons. To render the Court's finding meaningful, there should be serious efforts made towards accelerating the process of nuclear disarmament, including the early convening of a special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament.

While these major Powers advocate peace and condemn arms races by others, their industries aggressively develop and promote the sales of defence technologies and weapons of death. Like a drug dealer supplying his helplessly addicted victims, the northern-based arms industries keep poor countries mired in a cycle of poverty and insecurity, laying waste vital human skills and resources.

Perhaps such political elitism comes naturally to these powerful countries, many of which were imperial Powers before. A clue as to their priorities for the global agenda is to be found in the recent communiqué of the economic summit of the Group of Seven. Reform of the United Nations, in particular the Security Council, as an urgent issue, gave way to the pre-eminence of the globalization of the world economy. And so, the Security Council remains a blunt instrument of the foreign policies of the permanent members.

In the context of a globalized world, much is made of the terms "interdependence" and "mutual interests". Multilateralism has been elbowed aside. Yet multilateralism is the foundation of the international relations and cooperation which the United Nations symbolizes. From now on, globalization will take over and nations will lose their sovereignty.

Consider the current financial crisis that faces this Organization. The United Nations is on the verge of bankruptcy, being held to ransom by its major donor country, the wealthiest nation in the world. That country refuses to meet its assessed and legally due contributions, yet insists on maintaining its hegemony on global management.

The major Powers' solution to the United Nations stalemate is to speak of revitalizing the United Nations as if they were conducting a corporate downsizing exercise. While it is important to end bureaucratic inefficiencies and the wasteful use of resources, we should be mindful that the United Nations is not a business. Overconcentration on internal-management issues can deflect the attention of the United Nations from its major global responsibilities. While Malaysia is critical of the United Nations and its leadership, we cannot but regret the tendency of major Powers to assign the United Nations complex tasks, missions impossible, without clear mandates and authority or adequate resources. How does the United Nations undertake peacekeeping operations without the authority or the means to keep the peace?

We find the inequities of power-sharing in the United Nations to be intolerable and view with alarm prevailing trends towards weakening this Organization further. Already, the centre of gravity for all principal economic decisions that affect developing countries lies in the undemocratic Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization (WTO) and of course the self-appointed Group of Seven.

Strengthening multilateralism requires a reform of the Bretton Woods institutions, which dominate the development scene. These institutions are operating against their general mandate. Decision-making is undemocratic and untransparent. Despite their specific mandates to facilitate development and regulate the international monetary system, these institutions are used to discipline third-world countries and to act as debt collectors for the rich North. It is salutary to note that the World Bank collected a net amount of $7.2 billion in 1995 in debt repayment over and above what it disbursed in aid to the poor indebted countries and raked in a profit of almost $1.5 billion. The International Monetary Fund has now become an enforcer of the dictates of market lenders and is assuming the role of a global rating agency.

The majority of poor developing countries are saddled with unsustainable levels of debt that preclude them from a share of world prosperity and growth. Debt servicing on current scales is untenable and debtor countries, as a consequence, can do little to alleviate their poverty and misery. The chilling numbers speak for themselves - more is spent on servicing debt than on financing basic programmes for health care, education and humanitarian relief.

The reductions in the commitments for concessional assistance by almost all the industrial countries mark a turning point in international development cooperation. Bluntly put, the rich have reneged on solemn commitments and pledges. The cut-backs in pledges for the replenishment of international development assistance and the unwillingness to clear earlier arrears, triggered by a unilateral decision of the major contributor to scale back its contributions, have led other donors to scale back their contributions as well.

Now that the concept of globalism is so intimately linked with international trade, it is important critically to examine the realities of this so called "free trade". The painfully long history of the Uruguay Round negotiations should have forewarned us that the WTO, although established as a rules-based multilateral organization to regulate international trade, will become answerable only to the world's wealthiest economic Powers. Like the Bretton Woods institutions, the WTO remains outside any relationship of accountability to the far more democratic United Nations General Assembly.

During the Uruguay Round, the developing countries discovered that, instead of negotiating international rules on trade in manufactured goods, the rich countries of the North had widened the agenda and pushed for liberalization in economic areas where they clearly have an advantage, in particular, financial services and investments.

Even though some countries of the South have benefited from the liberalization of trade — and Malaysia is one of them — the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) nevertheless harbours new threats to developing and newly emerging economies. Not only have the poor countries of the South to struggle uphill merely to meet the basic needs of their peoples, but they are now bullied into adjusting their economic policies to meet their new obligations under GATT so that northern-based corporations can penetrate and capture their markets. The poor may not reserve their markets for themselves even when they have no capacity to penetrate the markets of the rich.

Fair competition and level playing fields are only for the rich. For example, their attempts to link the environment and labour standards to trade in manufactured goods is a clear attempt to deny developing countries their meagre competitive advantage. The relationship between trade and labour standards emerged not because of a concern for the well-being of workers in poor countries, but as protectionist moves aimed against growing and competitively-priced imports from the South.

To compound this unfair interpretation of the multilateral trade rules, we find that, when it comes to the transfer of technology, the northern countries take a fiercely anti-liberal stand, insisting that all WTO member States compulsorily introduce a set of national laws to protect intellectual property rights. Since most patents are owned by the North, this in effect means legal protection of their technological monopoly and a drastic curtailment of the right of developing countries to have access to new technology.

It appears, therefore, that the northern interpretation of "free trade" and "liberalization" are slogans that in reality mean liberalization when it benefits the North but protectionism if it can block the South. Thus, while goods and capital are permitted and encouraged to move around the globe, labour and technology may not. Even as we are asked to submit to GATT rules and the WTO, we find one country blatantly undermining the WTO by enacting extraterritorial laws that must be submitted to by all nations and their companies on pain of excommunication.

The GATT also fails to protect the genetic resources of the South while allowing genetically modified materials to be patented. We now have a situation where theft of genetic resources by western biotech transnational corporations enables them to make huge profits by producing patented genetic mutations of these same materials. To what depths have we sunk in the global marketplace when nature's gifts to the poor may not be protected but their modification by the rich becomes exclusive property?

There are of course many winners and losers in the world of the WTO, but we are concerned that the major losers will soon again be the poorest and most marginalized countries. A small number of developing countries, like Malaysia, have benefited. But let me point out that our gains have been achieved through thrift, productivity and the ingenuity of our people, hard-earned fruits of our labour. Lest it be forgotten, our new-found prosperity has also benefited those in the developed countries. Our products are competitively priced, thus contributing to lower inflation in the rich countries. Our prosperity has provided vast and expanding markets for the goods of rich countries, thus creating jobs and helping to lower their unemployment rates.

The term "globalization" has become the buzzword of our times. In the G-7 communiqué, globalization was touted as

> "a source of hope for the future ... responsible for the expansion of wealth and prosperity in the world." (*A/51/208, annex II, para. 2*)

However, some would argue that globalization, with its objectives of breaking down borders and sucking the countries of the world into one single economic entity, has eclipsed multilateralism or attempts to masquerade as the same thing. Indeed, globalization has been described by the rich as a

> "new global partnership for development". (*ibid., annex II, IV*)

If the current behaviour of the rich countries is anything to go by, globalization simply means the breaking down of the borders of countries so that those with the capital and the goods will be free to dominate the markets. Colonies in the former British Empire will remember "Imperial Preference" when they were made the exclusive markets of the metropolitan Power. Globalization can mean just that, except that the world market will belong to the rich nations. Linkages to non-trade issues will prevent the poor from ever challenging the rich, in the same way that the colonies were not allowed to industrialize.

We do indeed live in a brutal and unjust world, where the astonishing developments in science and technology and our increasingly sophisticated knowledge base are not matched by the ability of Governments to marshal forces to overcome the social and economic inequities of their countries. The facts and figures are well documented and widely known, but they are worth repeating just to jog our conscience — if we still have one. What are the universal values of this globalized world when increasing numbers of people in both the North and South live in abject poverty? A fifth of the human race — 1.3 billion people — lack access to the most basic necessities, such as food and clean drinking water, while preventable hunger and disease kill 35,000 children throughout the world every day. The 1996 United Nations Development Programme's Human Development Report states that, in the past 40 years, the richest 20 per cent of people have seen the differential between themselves and the poorest 20 per cent double.

Are we expected to believe in the sincerity of the rich countries when they talk about a new global partnership and the achievement of sustainable development, when the fact is that, today, we have over 20 million environmental refugees in addition to an equal number of traditional refugees? Why should the developing countries accept the twisted lexicon of northern development-speak when "development assistance" means that the net flow of wealth from poor countries to rich has increased to at least $400 billion a year when the terms of trade, transfer pricing, debt servicing and the brain drain are taken into account.

Wading through the obstacles of this strife-torn world is a critical dilemma that faces the international community today. It is one of international leadership and the failure to deal with these critical issues. Instead, we witness a persistent abnegation by the major Powers of the responsibilities that accompany the rights and privileges of such authority. We must determine the type of world and society we want to live in, and this should be based on truly universal values.

As we approach the next millennium and as the pre-eminence of transnational forces has blurred the definition of national sovereignty, we must seriously question why a powerful minority is still allowed to bankrupt and coerce the majority to meet its narrow economic and political needs. The poor are no longer independent. They have already lost control over their own currency. And now they have lost their borders too.

Freedom of the press is touted as a basic democratic principle. But control of the media by a handful of western corporations has made nonsense of this principle. Proclaiming to be windows on the world, the western media, manipulated and censored by those in control, invariably manage to distort reports so as to put anything happening in the South in the worst possible light. Anything positive in the developing countries is ignored.

The growth and influence of electronic, satellite and information technology is astounding. But its impact poses one of the biggest political and ethical challenges of our time, subverting and distorting our social consciousness. The elites of the North and the South have become blind to the enormities of reality. Events and people are stripped of their context, so that we become less capable of recognizing the common humanity and equal rights of all the people in the world. Pictures of poverty and inequality are no longer received with moral outrage, but have become simple facts of life. Thus begins the process of dehumanization and disengagement from the rest of human society.

Although without a doubt the information age will bring cheap and easy access to knowledge and education and facilitate worldwide business, its abuse is already affecting the moral values of the world. Smut and violence gratuitously distributed by criminals in the North are no less polluting than carbon dioxide emissions nor less dangerous than drug trafficking.

If one great Power can apply its laws to citizens of another country it considers to be guilty of drug trafficking, why cannot countries with different moral codes extradite the traffickers of pornography for legal action under the laws of the offended countries? Why cannot there be international laws and international courts to punish those who spread filth and incite racial hatred and racial violence? Before the whole world sinks deeper into moral decay, the international community should act. Abuse of the ubiquitous Internet system must be stopped.

The monopoly of the electronic media by the North should be broken. As it is, we are getting slanted news, made worse by broadcasters interpreting in favour of their own or their countries' interests. As usual, the poor countries with no role in operating the international media have become the principal victims of world news networks. Not only are distorted pictures of our countries being broadcast, but our own capacity to understand what is happening is being undermined. In the past, Western missionaries spread the Gospel. Today the media has taken over, and all our cherished values and diverse cultures are being destroyed.

The United Nations has not always been a failure. In its early years it helped to dismantle the empires of Western European countries. Malaysia is grateful to it, for it too won freedom because of the moral suasion of the United Nations. But the United Nations now seems blind to what is being done to Iraq and Chechnya. One great Power continues its vendetta against Iraq, firing missiles at distant targets to bring the Iraqi leadership to its knees, oblivious to the sufferings of the besieged Iraqi people. Another Power has shut the gates of mercy on the Chechens, and with rockets and bombs has killed indiscriminately and with appalling brutality in order that Chechnya should remain part of an empire. How much more should the Chechens suffer before the Security Council takes notice? Where are the vaunted defenders of human rights who claim that national borders will not stop them?

It is a fact that every year many statements are made at the United Nations that lament the crises of poverty, third-world debt, human rights abuses, conflicts and wars, social disintegration and environmental degradation. It is almost boring. And yet nothing much has been done which could bring about an amelioration of this sad state of affairs.

Perhaps it is because the processes of intergovernmental consensus decision-making of the United Nations are tedious and frustrating. Perhaps it is mismanagement by the Governments of so many poor nations which afford many excuses for the rich not to help.

It is of course easy to use the United Nations as a forum to unmask the hypocrisies of both the North and the South, but it is more difficult to work collectively to implement change and solve problems. Still, Malaysia believes that this repetitive criticism is valid and necessary, that international injustice and oppression should not be swept into the dustbins of history. I would like to say again that Malaysia strongly believes in the multilateralism of the United Nations and is prepared to invest in this international Organization with all our strength, beliefs and moral fibre.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Malaysia for the statement he has just made.

Dato' Seri Mahathir Mohamad, Prime Minister of Malaysia, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea, His Excellency Mr. Ro-Myung Gong.

Mr. Gong (Republic of Korea): On behalf of the Government and the people of the Republic of Korea, Sir, I would like to express my sincere congratulations on your assumption of the presidency of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly. We are confident that under your able leadership the Assembly will take action to revitalize the world Organization, building on the foundation laid by your predecessor, Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral of Portugal. My gratitude goes also to the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, and the staff of the Secretariat for their excellent work for this session.

Mr. Baumanis (Latvia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The most pressing business of this Assembly is to create the architecture for United Nations renewal. The Member States, with vision and determination, need to construct step by step a consensus on reform that will not only bring the Organization out of its present crisis, but will also prepare the world community to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century. We welcome the ongoing efforts to strengthen and revitalize the United Nations. But at the same time we must admit that unless progress is accelerated in the months ahead, there is a real danger that the momentum and sense of purpose spawned by the fiftieth anniversary could well be lost.

My Government actively supports the various working groups of the General Assembly as they seek ways to make the United Nations more effective, efficient and democratic. As a member of the Group of Sixteen States in support of renewing multilateralism, we are also pleased to actively participate in the efforts to enhance the principle of multilateralism. The Group's joint statement embodying this principle was reported to the General Assembly last Wednesday by Prime Minister Persson of Sweden, on behalf of the 16 Heads of State or Government.

All these efforts, however, will be of no use if Member States fail either to meet their financial obligations or to make the political compromises necessary to produce a durable package of reforms. Let us not forget that the very principles of multilateralism on which the United Nations was founded are at risk. As was so aptly put by the President of the General Assembly in his 17 September inaugural speech, "the syndrome of 'business as usual'" (*Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-first Session, Plenary Meetings, 1st meeting, p. 3*) must be discarded.

Our Organization is in serious financial trouble due to the arrears and outstanding contributions of Member States. The Security Council needs to be modernized to reflect the expansion in United Nations membership, to be more equitably balanced geographically and to work efficiently, transparently and democratically. To better serve the needs of economic development and to reduce duplication, we should undertake a sweeping reassessment of the scores of subsidiary bodies of the Economic and Social Council and of the Assembly itself. While we welcome General Assembly resolution 50/227 as a step in the right direction, much more needs to be done. History will not judge the United Nations on how many committees it forms or how many resolutions it passes, but on how much it does on the ground, day in and day out, to further peace, prosperity and justice for the world's peoples.

Today I would like to focus my remarks on four major challenges facing the United Nations and then to say a few words about the situation on the Korean peninsula.

In considering the architecture for United Nations renewal, we should shape an Organization better prepared to respond to the following four priority needs: first, restraining the proliferation of dangerous and destructive weaponry; secondly, bolstering United Nations capabilities for effective peacekeeping and peace-building; thirdly, assisting economic and social development while enhancing protection of the environment; and fourthly, improving mechanisms for ensuring respect for international law and human rights.

Calls for a new international order will ring hollow without more reliable controls on the spread of dangerous armaments, particularly those capable of mass destruction. As a supporter of the early conclusion of a comprehensive test-ban treaty (CTBT), my Government heartily welcomed the long-awaited adoption of the Treaty earlier this month. The conclusion of the CTBT will help curb nuclear proliferation in all its forms and will contribute towards nuclear disarmament. As an original signatory to the CTBT, the Republic of Korea aims to ratify the Treaty swiftly. In order for the CTBT to become universal and verifiable, my Government urges all countries to accede to the Treaty at the earliest possible date.

While the Conference on Disarmament failed to reach consensus on the CTBT, the Conference, through two and a half years of intense negotiations, was instrumental in articulating the eventual Treaty. I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the Conference and to assure the Assembly that the Republic of Korea, as a new member of the Conference, will spare no efforts to contribute to its vital work.

Despite much progress towards a world free of nuclear weapons, the Korean peninsula still faces the threat of nuclear proliferation. North Korea has yet to achieve nuclear transparency. Once again, my delegation urges North Korea to comply with its obligations under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards in a comprehensive manner, and to implement fully and faithfully the Framework Agreement between the United States and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We also renew our call on North Korea to live up to its obligations under the South-North Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

Until they are eliminated from the face of the Earth, chemical and biological weapons too will pose a grave threat to humanity. Towards this end, the Republic of Korea, as an original signatory to the chemical weapons Convention in 1993, recently concluded the domestic procedures to ratify the Convention. We look forward to its swift entry into force, for universal adherence to the Convention is critical to achieving a total ban on chemical weapons. My delegation therefore strongly urges those countries which have not yet joined the Convention, including the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, to do so as early as possible.

Moreover, my Government, which acceded to the biological weapons Convention supports the efforts to introduce a strict verification system into the Convention. Both of these non-proliferation measures are essential building blocks for world peace.

My Government, moreover, shares the international concern over the millions of anti-personnel landmines scattered throughout the world. We are looking forward to working closely with other Member States to minimize the suffering and casualties among innocent civilians caused by these indiscriminate weapons. To this end, I am pleased to announce that the Republic of Korea will again extend its moratorium on the export of anti-personnel mines for another year.

The second priority for United Nations renewal should be to adapt and bolster its uniquely valuable peacekeeping and peace- building work to meet new challenges. Following several years of rising expectations and expanding mandates, Member States have developed over the past two years a more sober appreciation not only of the limits of United Nations capabilities but, more important, of their own willingness to provide the requisite material and human support for a more ambitious role for the world body. Both the scope and the nature of peacekeeping operations are being tested as the demands for United Nations involvement remain high in a world confronted by an alarming number of intra-State conflicts and acts of terrorism.

Today's peacekeepers are often required to undertake diverse tasks such as monitoring violations of human rights, staging elections, rehabilitating civic institutions and reintegrating combatants and refugees into peacetime society. Thus, peacekeeping now directly contributes to peace-building and conflict prevention. Post-conflict peace-building, by rehabilitating a country's war-ravaged economic and social base, can serve to prevent the recurrence of conflict. Member States should recognize, however, that the broadening of peacekeeping objectives should be matched by an expansion in the resources and capabilities of the United Nations for carrying out these tasks. Peace, too, has a price.

Recently, several promising proposals have been put forward for enhancing the rapid deployment capability of the United Nations. We consider the United Nations system of standby arrangements — currently comprising of 59 countries, including the Republic of Korea — to be an innovative and practical mechanism for coping with emergency situations. We also believe that the growing interest and participation of Member States have boosted the credibility of the system of standby arrangements, making it easier to secure the consent of parties in a given conflict to United Nations peacekeeping involvement. In addition, we support the establishment of a rapidly deployable headquarters team within the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, as proposed by the friends of rapid deployment. The Korean Government is willing to detail personnel to the team as part of our contribution to strengthening the United Nations rapid deployment capability.

Since we first dispatched an engineering unit to the United Nations peacekeeping operation in Somalia in 1993, the Republic of Korea has contributed to many peacekeeping operations around the world. We intend to expand our participation in terms of human resources, and material and political support for practical steps to improve the peace-management capacity of the United Nations.

In an uncertain world, terrorism poses an ever-present threat to international and domestic peace and security. Having been a direct victim of terrorism, the Republic of Korea strongly condemns all acts of terrorism. We urge the international community to take firm action to contain and combat terrorism. The 1994 Declaration on Measures to Eliminate International Terrorism clearly states that terrorism in all forms is not only criminal, but also unjustifiable under any circumstances, regardless of political, ideological, ethnic or racial motivation. My Government reaffirms its strong commitment to join the ongoing efforts to eradicate terrorism worldwide.

Economic and social development should also remain a high priority at a time when scientific progress and information technology are globalizing the world economy at a rapid pace. Driven by unprecedented levels of cross-border trade and investment, globalization presents new opportunities to bolster economic development and improve quality of life. Nonetheless, we must not lose sight of the detrimental effects of this trend, which threaten to leave some developing countries increasingly marginalized.

The United Nations has an obligation to try to help those least developed countries, particularly in Africa, that are truly in need. My delegation fully supports the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative for development in Africa, a joint undertaking by the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions launched last March. We look forward to joining other Member States in a common effort to bring this worthy endeavour to fruition.

Having risen from the devastation of the Korean War, the Republic of Korea has achieved sustained economic growth and advancements in living standards over the past three decades. Seeking to share the lessons of our own development experience, we have worked to help other developing countries apply two key elements of our own growth: capacity-building and human resource development. The Korean International Cooperation Agency is implementing diverse programs to assist other developing countries in this regard. At the same time, Korea will increase its voluntary contribution to the operational activities of the United Nations by 120 per cent during 1996-97. In these and many other ways, we are determined to participate in United Nations efforts to bring about economic and social progress throughout the world.

Since 1994, my Government has worked with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to establish the International Vaccine Institute in Seoul. This Institute will be dedicated to capacity-building for developing countries in the development and use of vaccines, particularly for children and the impoverished. The official launching of the International Vaccine Institute will take place in New York on 28 October. We would encourage as many countries as possible to show their support for this worthy and noble project by becoming party to the agreement.

The emergence of unprecedented global environmental issues, such as climate change and biodiversity, calls for genuine global partnership based on equitable burden-sharing. The special session on environmental issues of the General Assembly in 1997 will provide us with a valuable opportunity to formulate a clear, sustainable development strategy for the twenty-first century. On 5 June 1997, immediately before the special session, my Government will co-host World Environment Day, together with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), as part of our efforts to contribute to the resolution of environmental issues.

The fourth theme for United Nations renewal, in our view, should be to reinforce the unique United Nations capacity for codifying, monitoring and encouraging respect for international law and human rights. As the Charter so eloquently attests, genuine peace and stability depend upon a healthy respect for international law and human rights norms. The continuing United Nations commitment to human rights and social justice was reaffirmed by a series of international conferences during the 1990s. They include the Vienna World Conference on Human Rights, in 1993, and the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995.

In particular, the Beijing Conference underscored the critical principle that gender equality — through the protection of women's human rights and the eradication of all forms of violence against women — forms the foundation of a sound and prosperous society. The Republic of Korea is committed to maintaining its support for international efforts to advance the status of women.

All of us need to do more, however, to help the United Nations live up to its potential for promoting human rights. Its mechanisms for furthering respect for universal human rights need to be reinforced and upgraded across the board. We need to enhance the coordinating role of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and of the resources of the Centre for Human Rights. The Korean Government will do its best to make a meaningful contribution to this end.

Envisioned since the Nuremberg and Tokyo Tribunals of a half century ago, the idea of an international court to punish crimes against humanity is now being materialized, even as the Yugoslavia and Rwanda Tribunals are struggling to bring to justice criminals who have committed genocide and other mass crimes. A preparatory committee is refining the draft statute of the international criminal court, prepared by the International Law Commission. We look forward to the early establishment of the court, which we believe will deter violators of human rights. We also welcome the establishment of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, which should contribute significantly to the strengthening of international law and order.

The road to democracy in the Republic of Korea has been long and difficult. Indeed, laying the foundation for democracy in a developing country is never easy. It requires a vigilant public conscious of democracy and human rights and a government willing to nurture the will of its citizens. This has been and will remain a primary objective of the Korean Government. We are making every effort to promote further human rights and democracy through the enhancement of our legal and institutional mechanisms.

My Government has also been active in the endeavour to assist the democratic impulse throughout the world. Lending our support to the electoral assistance activities of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, we provided a dozen election monitors, as well as supplies, for the international operation to ensure free and fair elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In the past, we also participated in the electoral observer missions in Mozambique, Cambodia, South Africa and Palestine.

Let me now turn to the situation on the Korean peninsula. Despite the easing of tensions worldwide since the end of the cold war, the Korean peninsula continues to be a source of instability, posing threats to the peace and security of north-east Asia and beyond. Unfortunately, the tides of openness and reconciliation that swept other parts of the world have not yet reached the Korean peninsula, the last remaining legacy of the cold war.

Last week North Korea dispatched a military submarine to infiltrate armed commandos into the South. We uncovered this infiltration when the submarine ran aground on the shore of Kangnung, a city on the South Korean east coast, and 26 armed agents are believed to have come ashore. Of these, 21 were killed and one was captured. According to the captured agent, the armed infiltrators were all military officers from the North Korean defence ministry. Subsequent examinations also revealed shocking findings. The 11 North Koreans found dead on the day of the landing were apparently killed by their cohorts for reasons unknown.

The investigation is still under way to find out the purpose of the infiltration and other details, but the findings to date present a strong possibility that last week's infiltration is part of a larger-scale infiltration operation.

This brazen act of military provocation by North Korea constitutes not only a serious infringement of our territorial waters and sovereignty, but also a blatant violation of the Armistice Agreement. It also clearly demonstrates that North Korea still seeks Korean reunification by any means, including the use of force. Needless to say, this act of provocation poses a direct threat to peace and stability on and around the Korean peninsula.

We once again urge North Korea immediately to renounce its absurd goal of unifying Korea by force and to pursue peaceful coexistence with the South. The North should also abide by the Armistice Agreement and end any attempt to disrupt the current armistice regime.

We also take this opportunity to renew our call on North Korea to accept our proposal for four-party talks involving both Koreas, China and the United States, which will enable constructive negotiations for the establishment of a lasting peace on the peninsula. In the absence of Pyongyang's positive response and given the seriousness of North Korea's violation of the armistice, my country firmly believes that the Armistice Agreement should remain in full force.

At the historic fiftieth session of the General Assembly, we took a collective look at where the United Nations had been and where it was going. In an open and forward-looking spirit, we compared visions of the kind of world body that will be needed to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century. Now, with this fifty-first session, comes the hard part: redoubling our collective commitment to the world body so that it can become a means for translating our visions into realities.

Together, we can fashion the architecture of United Nations renewal. Can we achieve harmony out of diversity? Can we refocus our energies on the four priorities of stemming the spread of weapons of mass destruction, bolstering United Nations peacekeeping and peace-building capabilities, advancing sustainable economic and social development, and reinforcing our joint commitment to international law and human rights? The answer to these questions must be a resounding collective "yes". The Republic of Korea stands ready to make its share of contributions, through the United Nations, to meet the challenges of the next century.

The Acting President: I now call on the Representative of Malta, His Excellency Mr. Joseph Cassar.

Mr. Cassar (Malta): May I congratulate the President on his new responsibilities and pay tribute to Mr. Freitas do Amaral of Portugal. During last year's jubilee session, his persistence furthered this Assembly's revitalization process.

Less than a year ago, world leaders met in this Hall to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations and renew their commitment to the Charter. The world community rejoiced. Hope had survived the darkness of the cold war. Trust in the United Nations was, however, tempered by an awareness of the difficulties threatening its survival and the aspirations of the peoples it represents. Could the Organization address the new phenomenon of instability which risked sapping its capacities and resources? What prevailed was a pragmatic assessment. The alternatives to the United Nations were either that of attempting to reinvent the wheel or scuttling this forum of dialogue and cooperation to have arrogance and chaos usher in the new millennium.

We, the peoples, can ill afford war. Rhetoric can never cancel the grief and destruction it generates. The United Nations was founded to save succeeding generations from this scourge. Notwithstanding the then-widespread colonialism and the angst of bipolarism, the world community worked to contain the risk of war. As the ability to destroy grew, so did the potential of States to be annihilated. Brave, bold steps required clear vision and a commitment to peace. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, extended indefinitely last year, is a monumental landmark in this arduous quest. The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is another milestone. Malta co-sponsored the resolution that led to its adoption by the General Assembly and is honoured to have been amongst its first signatories.

The challenge remains. We must generate broader confidence to ensure universal adherence and compliance to these treaties and others, including the Chemical Weapons Convention. Procrastination in their ratification by the States that matter most could expose them to the danger of becoming dead letters. Malta welcomes the commitment expressed by President Clinton of the United States of America in this regard.

The risk of world conflict, though remote, is still present. The total horror of a nuclear holocaust induces an in-built restraint. This is not the case with conventional armaments or weapons of mass destruction. Millions of victims of local and regional conflicts — be they dead, maimed, refugees, displaced, widowed or orphaned — continue to torment the conscience of humankind. These tragedies spur us to pursue initiatives which foster security and confidence. The call for a ban on the production, export and use of anti-personnel landmines has Malta's full support. The seven-point programme of action proposed by the Foreign Minister Kinkel of Germany provides a good basis for progress.

We must melt the bastions of suspicion. Only a consolidated regime of confidence-building and disarmament measures can buttress belief in and commitment to the peaceful settlement of disputes. This process requires regional and international concerted action. Malta has been active in promoting security and cooperation in the Mediterranean. Malta and France have both made proposals for a stability pact for the Mediterranean. The sharing of concerns among countries afflicted by common problems can help overcome them. This and other initiatives could turn our sea of turmoil into one of mutual trust.

Malta's foreign policy is both inspired and dependent on the notion of regional stability. It continues to sustain our efforts at greater Mediterranean cooperation. It inspired our proposal to have the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe declare itself a regional arrangement in terms of Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter.

The enlargement of the European Union, of which Malta expects to become a full member in the near future, provides a unique dimension of the process of regional cooperation. Malta welcomes the statement made by Deputy Prime Minister Spring of Ireland on behalf of the European Union. It reflects the common values which have always inspired the European process and led to the consolidation of democracy, prosperity, social justice and solidarity. In the framework of the structured dialogue, Malta has worked with its European Union partners on key issues to promote peaceful coexistence, cooperation, development and progress within the world community.

Malta supports the Euro-Mediterranean partnership. Cooperation in the political, security, economic and financial areas cannot but yield results. Social, cultural and human relations are other important aspects of this partnership. Malta has always seen its application for membership of the European Union in terms that encompass the economic and the broader political dimensions. The successful outcome of the negotiations on Malta's accession, due to start in the coming months, will further strengthen our contribution.

Interlocking institutions of the European security architecture, such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Partnership for Peace and the Council of Europe, have strengthened the distinct areas of cooperation on which security depends. We must identify and combat threats to peace as they emerge.

We have witnessed the horror of intolerance based on nationality, race, creed or political belief. Agonizing conflicts and acts of terrorism have shattered lives and trampled upon the rights and dignity of whole populations.

Such events have shocked us into action. The establishment of the ad hoc Tribunals and the current negotiations on the establishment of an international criminal court, which Malta fully supports, are proof of the varied manner in which the United Nations responds to new needs.

The road to peace, through the compromise of negotiated settlement, is not always immediate or popular. Yet, it is the only path. Reconciliation does not happen of its own accord. It requires courage and leaders who stretch out their hand to their adversaries and build, brick by brick, the edifice of stability.

The universally acclaimed processes which rekindled the hope of settlement in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Middle East are parts of this noble task.

The implementation of agreements reached between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization, the resumption of negotiations and the full realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people are indispensable for stability in the Middle East. The international community must continue to assist this process. Malta welcomes the first meeting between Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Arafat. The most recent incidents of violence in Jerusalem and Ramallah in recent days give rise to great concern. The momentum of achievement should not be dissipated by acts which erode the confidence built thus far.

The people of Cyprus have thirsted for peace and unity for too long and also deserve the attainment of a just and long-lasting settlement.

In this Hall, recognition was always and exclusively reserved for peacemakers. It was never bestowed on warmongers, aggressors or cynics who constantly doubt and discourage others from building hope.

The United Nations Children's Fund, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the World Health Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Development Programme and United Nations actions in Palestine, Namibia, Cambodia and Mozambique are part of this Organization's history in contributing towards the well-being and development of peoples, peacekeeping and peace-building. The success achieved should not be robbed of merit by instances where it is lacking. Are not the Blue Helmets across the globe a signal of engagement? Are not negotiations on preventive diplomacy a commitment to addressing the root causes of tension and conflict? Are not our deliberations on development means to create stability and well-being at the local level?

In 50 years, we have created a range of tools to promote cooperation. True enough, our tools need perfecting. We must calibrate them to current realities. Tools, however, need to be used. A shed full of perfect, but unused, tools never provided any farmer with a livelihood. Only the will to operate tools and invest energy where it matters helps to reap the fruit.

The future demands a more action-oriented approach: more time in the field, rather than pondering in the shed. This resolve inspires us as we follow up the United Nations conferences on the environment, human rights, population, social development, women's rights and human settlements. The World Food Summit is another example of action.

Renewed focus on development has led to various initiatives, including those specific to Africa. Partnerships forged by the European Union and Japan with the developing world reflect active cooperative involvement. Achievement registered by a number of developing States underlines the benefit of such undertakings. The dialogue instituted between Non-Aligned Movement, the Group of 77 and the Group of Seven is an important and welcome step.

Malta's academic institutions, in collaboration with United Nations agencies and the Commonwealth secretariat, annually sponsor and organize a number of training programmes. Most fall into the category of the training of trainers. Students from the developing world and from countries with economies in transition have attended short- or long-term courses and are now back in their countries directly contributing to development.

Malta, through its Government and non-governmental organizations, regularly donates funds for a number of humanitarian and overseas development aid programmes. These initiatives, together with the traditional involvement of Maltese teachers and social workers in the developing world as volunteers from non-governmental organizations or members of religious orders, symbolize our national commitment to international solidarity.

We view our collective achievements with pride. Each convention and treaty agreed upon by the international community is a testimonial of our common will to build a better life, each a symbol of our resolve to beat our swords into ploughshares. Yet, the anguished sea of faces of millions of children denied the right to hope still haunts us, whether it is war, famine, or exploitation which generates misery. Our collective future can never be secure until these children acquire the right to smile in hope and to their fair share in the bounties of society.

Cynicism and fatalism cannot cure us of social ills. Blended with hope, pragmatism yields reward. What is more pragmatic than the care of the destitute to which people like Mother Theresa dedicate their lives. One person less going to bed with an empty stomach, one person less torn with pain, one person less denied shelter — small pragmatic steps inspired by the innate dignity of each human being; acts of caring solidarity which each individual, each family, each community is capable of; commitment to others generates hope. Each ounce of food which alleviates famine; each drop of water which combats drought and desertification; each dose of medicine which contains the spread of disease; each book which kindles knowledge helps build a better world.

Democracy, the rule of law, free and fair elections and constant vigilance in the promotion and protection of human rights are the guarantors of peace. International election observer missions are an important contribution to confidence-building. Malta has participated in this process, most recently in Palestine and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

As much as action is instrumental, so is restraint. Emissions which pollute the environment; lumbering which depletes the rain forests; indiscriminate trawling which exhausts our fishstocks — even if disguised as economic imperatives — undermine efforts towards sustainable development.

Malta looks forward to this Assembly's 1997 special session to follow up and update the Rio achievements.

We have strategies and action plans. Now is the time for dynamic engagement. Present and future generations demand that we use these instruments to combat drug trafficking, illicit arms transfers, money laundering and organized crime, which sap the life of the communities we built with so much effort.

My Government is totally committed in this regard. Legislation adopted has strengthened the arm of the law in apprehending traffickers, halting the flow of drugs and confiscating illegal funds accrued. This determined policy is bearing fruit. Malta supports the convening of a General Assembly special session in 1998 comprehensively to address drug trafficking and related issues. Poland's proposed convention to fight transnational crime has been noted with interest. Regional and international cooperation on these issues remains the key to success.

Our children have a right to a life free from fear in a safer world. That remains our responsibility as parents and policy makers.

The United Nations is often accused of lacking in its assigned role. Yet the United Nations is what Member States make of it. They decide on its future. United Nations reform requires discipline in our operating methods. We have to discard self-imposed fetters and act with the revived spirit that our times demand.

Tempered by the fires of conflict and the lessons of the League of Nations, the founding fathers built into the Charter a balance worth preserving. Reform should not be reduced to a simple juxtaposition of organizational charts. Only by revitalizing the spirit that gives our Organization life and purpose will we achieve the ideal of nations large and small working in unison for a better world.

As President of the General Assembly at its forty-fifth session, in the immediate aftermath of the cold war, my Deputy Prime Minister, Mr. Guido de Marco, called for reflection and action to better the symbiotic relationship between the United Nations principal organs. Since then working groups have been set up to discuss restructuring.

Within the Security Council reform group, work has evolved, but it is still far from reaching common ground. There is consensus that the Council should be expanded and be more representative. The type of expansion and the categories are still subject to a wide divergence of views. Malta looks forward to an expanded Security Council that best serves the world community. On the merits of increasing the Council's permanent membership, we still have an open mind. The very nature of permanence demands that we establish clear and exact criteria on required qualifications for present and future candidates.

Giving due recognition to changes in international relations and the nature and extent of the contribution of States towards tasks assigned to the Council, we must avoid rigid stances or those that may be construed as such. There are a number of compromise proposals that could help us find a solution, even if temporarily. We have listened with great attention and positive interest to Foreign Minister Dini explaining the Italian proposal as one which takes into account both the special contribution of a number of States and the right of all States to serve on the Council regardless of their size, wealth or military might.

Only understandings between States that win the confidence of all can assist us in surmounting existing obstacles. We are satisfied to note the consensus existing on bettering the important qualitative relationship between the Security Council and the General Assembly. Changes introduced in the working methods of the Council are an indication of a universal positive disposition.

The Open-ended High-level Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations system has registered significant progress and tackled a variety of complex issues. Malta has consistently advocated greater efficiency and a more effective role for the General Assembly to dissipate negative perceptions that may exist. Responsibilities of this Assembly, of which we are all permanent members, are many and varied. We have already noted the benefits of streamlining. More is required. Our deliberations have an impact on public opinion and political contingencies. We would be remiss if indifference or bureaucratization were to numb us from fully assuming the responsibilities and obligations imposed by the Charter.

Starting with the forty-fifth session, my Deputy Prime Minister has also called for a review of the role of the Trusteeship Council. Creating or abolishing institutions necessarily has an impact on the principles on which they are based. The balance characteristic of the Charter needs to be enhanced rather than diluted. The United Nations should continue to cherish all principles on which it was founded, including the notion of trust, on which the Trusteeship Council rests.

Last year, Malta submitted a resolution seeking the opinion of States on the Trusteeship Council's future. The diversity of views expressed is indicative of the existing potential. Malta looks forward to further discussion on the subject, confident in the will to better utilize existing institutions to serve the principles of the Charter. Our common heritage and the welfare of future generations demand that in reorienting the United Nations we preserve and protect the vision and ideals that gave it birth.

Thirty years ago Malta launched the concept of common heritage. This concept has become ingrained in the reality of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and the International Sea-Bed Authority. It takes time for ideas to mature and consensus to emerge. The most recent development, which we welcome, is the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, to be inaugurated at Hamburg, Germany, next month. Those institutions will undoubtedly continue to contribute to the underlying principle of trust in protecting and preserving our common heritage.

The financial crisis facing the Organization has dampened hopes and discouraged many. Malta believes that the ongoing exercise of assessing costs, eliminating waste and rationalizing structures must go on. Although pruning is essential to strengthen the United Nations, so also is the need for all Member States to meet obligations and to pay their assessed contributions to the regular and peacekeeping budgets, in full, promptly and without conditions. Discussion on the scale of assessments will also contribute to improving the financial base of the Organization.

"Bankruptcy" is an awful word. It is too often repeated in relation to the United Nations. Finances are undoubtedly a cause of common concern. There is, however, another threatening phenomenon which looms — moral bankruptcy. This is by far the greater danger and the one that we should fear most.

With the end of the cold war, a second-generation United Nations had to find in its Member States the resolve and commitment to face winds of change that at times assume the force of gales and whirlwinds. With a steady hand on the rudder and our eyes fixed on that guiding star that inspired the founding fathers, we can still bring ship to port. The fate of humankind is our precious cargo and responsibility.

The Acting President: The next speaker is His Excellency Mr. Jaime Gama, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Portugal.

Mr. Gama (Portugal) (*spoke in Portuguese; English text furnished by the delegation*): I should first like to congratulate the President of the General Assembly on his election and to express our confidence in his capability to conduct the work of the current session. In congratulating him on his election, I am pleased by the fact that he represents a country, Malaysia, with which Portugal has excellent relations in addition to deep historical and cultural ties.

I believe that it is understandable that I should also take this opportunity to pay tribute to the outgoing President, my fellow countryman Mr. Freitas do Amaral, for the dedicated, competent and innovative manner in which he directed the work of the fiftieth session of the General Assembly.

I wish also to express to the Secretary-General my admiration for the manner in which he has carried out his functions during a period in which the United Nations has been called upon to take an ever more active role in a variety of aspects of international life.

My colleague from Ireland has already addressed the Assembly on behalf of the 15 member States of the European Union, expressing positions to which Portugal fully subscribes. Nevertheless, I would like to reflect on some questions that are of particular importance to my country.

Allow me to point out that while speaking in my capacity as Minister for Foreign Affairs of Portugal, I am also speaking as a representative of a country that is extremely proud to belong to the Lusophone Community. This is probably the newest international organization, and as President of its Council of Ministers, I foresee an important role for it in the concert of nations, in useful and effective cooperation with the United Nations and its agencies. It represents a strengthening of the solidarity and fraternity that unite these countries and will empower the economic and social development of its peoples, while affirming and disseminating the Portuguese language, which is the common heritage of over 200 million people scattered over every continent.

The Lusophone Community, made up of Angola, Brazil, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Sao Tome and Principe and Portugal, is a political project based on the Portuguese language, which is the historic bond and a common heritage of the seven countries, despite geographical separation. It will always be an open forum, based on mutual support and close relationships with all Portuguese-speaking communities of the world and cooperation with other, similar organizations.

One year after the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary, we are still far from meeting the expectations created and the real needs of the Organization. It is clear that a process on this scale can be realized only in the medium term.

A core issue of the reform process that we must address is the resolution of the serious financial crisis of the United Nations. We believe that the resolution of the crisis can be found through three essential approaches: the fulfilment of commitments, in full and on time; review of the scale of assessments in order to reflect the capacity of Member States to pay; and financial rigour and rationalization of existing resources. In the spirit of contributing to the resolution of this crisis, Portugal voluntarily increased its 1995 contributions to the peacekeeping budget, moving from Group C to Group B in the scale of assessments. That decision will result in a five-fold increase of our initial contribution.

Equally important is the reform of the Security Council. We are convinced that only with an adequate and balanced representation of all the world's regions will the Security Council be more democratic and, consequently, more effective in the formulation and implementation of its decisions.

When considering the process of reform, I must also refer to issues related to the Agenda for Development and the Agenda for Peace. With regard to the former, we must recognize the need to review the entire system of international aid for development and consider the role the United Nations should play in this domain.

The integrated and sustainable development we propose should be pursued in all its facets, not only in the economic field, but also in the consolidation of democratic institutions. To meet these objectives, it will also be necessary to implement the decisions taken at the major United Nations global conferences, as it has been at those conferences that the Agenda for Development has gradually taken shape. This question is all the more important to us in Portugal, since we focus special attention on the North-South dialogue, which is attested to by the fact that the North-South Centre is located in Lisbon.

Aware of the fact that today the important task in this area is to help the developing countries, especially the more vulnerable ones, Portugal has gradually increased the funds it sets aside for development aid, both at the bilateral level and through the framework of international organizations of which it is a member. In this context, our official development assistance exceeds the goal established for donors at the Paris conference in 1990.

At the multilateral level, allow me to single out the importance we attribute to the Lomé Convention as a vital instrument of aid and cooperation between the members of the European Union and the countries of Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific. Thus, we have strongly advocated a review of the Convention based on maintaining the principles of partnership and cooperation.

Maintaining international peace and security undoubtedly continues to be the priority challenge faced by the United Nations. The results achieved in most of the relevant missions lead us to conclude that we should not lessen our commitment or the dynamism of our activity.

It is true that the United Nations cannot abdicate its mission of helping to restore peace. We also believe, however, that efforts should be focused on conflict prevention. But in both areas, the question of cooperation between the United Nations and regional intergovernmental organizations has been discerningly raised. This can be seen in some recent successful examples, such as the joint action of the United Nations, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the Western European Union (WEU), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the European Union (EU) in the territory of the former Yugoslavia, organizations of which Portugal is a member and in which it participates actively.

Another component of the efforts towards peace is disarmament. Portugal welcomes the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). Portugal, which will contribute significantly to the CTBT verification system, has signed and will shortly ratify the Treaty, and appeals to all Member States of the United Nations to do the same.

It is urgent that the process of enlarging the Conference on Disarmament be completed, as well as that of deliberating on its agenda and the rules for decision-making and for admission of new members, which should be improved. It is increasingly essential to seriously debate nuclear disarmament, with a view to achieving the ultimate goal of the permanent eradication of nuclear weapons. We advocate that the Conference on Disarmament should, early at its next session, begin negotiations on a treaty for the banning of the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons.

With regard to the serious problem of anti-personnel landmines, Portugal hopes that concrete measures will be taken this year towards a complete prohibition of the manufacture and export of those devices of death and destruction. For our part, we have already decreed a moratorium on the manufacture and export of such weapons. Furthermore, I would like to mention that on 23 August last my country ratified the Convention on the banning of chemical weapons.

Among the many activities of the United Nations, I would like to single out two areas which I consider essential: the environment and human rights.

The protection of the environment is becoming an increasingly prominent issue. In this field, we recognize the great importance of the problems of climate change, desertification and the protection of the marine environment. For this reason, Portugal has been closely following the implementation of the principles and decisions adopted in this regard at major United Nations conferences.

I would also like to underline the particular sensitivity of Portugal, whose territory includes two archipelagos — the Azores and Madeira — to questions relating to the sea from a perspective of the development of balanced management of fishing and marine resources. To this end, my country is currently concluding the necessary procedures that will soon permit it to ratify the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Furthermore, on Portugal's initiative, the General Assembly, at its forty-ninth session, declared 1998 International Year of the Ocean. Focusing on this subject, Expo 98 will be held in Lisbon that same year, with the theme, "The oceans: a heritage for the future". Its central focus will be the relationship between the current state of knowledge on marine resources and the urgency of ensuring, through a rational and scientific management process, a greater ecological equilibrium on our planet.

The defence and promotion of human rights is one of the principal concerns of Portuguese foreign policy. We believe that it is the responsibility of every Government to guarantee in their respective countries the full enjoyment of all human rights, but that it is also legitimate for the international community to concern itself with ensuring the promotion and protection of those rights around the globe.

We consider that the United Nations has a key role to play, and thus it is indispensable that the High Commissioner and the Centre for Human Rights be provided with adequate human and financial resources for the fulfilment of his important task.

A constant pursuit of Portuguese foreign policy has been to stress the need to find a political and diplomatic solution to the question of East Timor, without which it will not be possible to put an to end the systematic abuses of human rights that continue to prevail in that territory.

Portugal has repeatedly stated — and I do so here once again — that its sole objective, apart from the immediate concern of defending the human rights and identity of the people of East Timor in their different aspects, is to find a just, comprehensive and internationally acceptable solution to the question of East Timor, in accordance with international law and the full respect for the rights of its people, namely its right to self-determination.

Despite the difficulties that have been encountered, the difference between the substantive positions of Portugal and Indonesia and the slowness of the process, we continue to be committed to finding such a solution through dialogue and under the auspices of the Secretary-General, whose patient efforts I wish to pay tribute to here. In the pursuit of that objective, we consider it extremely important to continue the active association of Timorese representatives to that process, which deserves the unequivocal support of the international community.

In this regard, I must note here the increasing support that this question has received from the international community, namely through the adoption of positions that range from the resolutions of the European Parliament to the declarations of the 21 Heads of State and Government of the member countries of the Ibero-American summit, and include the common position adopted this year by the 15 member States of the European Union, to which a further 14 European countries associated themselves.

Portugal, exercising its responsibilities as administering Power of the non-self-governing territory of East Timor, will continue to cooperate constructively with the United Nations, with full regard for the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant resolutions, towards the indispensable conclusion of the process of decolonization in East Timor.

In this era, at the close of the millennium, marked by such profound changes and close interdependencies, we believe that the African continent deserves special attention from the international community. To that end, all efforts should be pooled towards the creation of conditions that will permit it to benefit from a development process similar to that enjoyed by other *regions of the world.*

We are therefore acting in the context of the international organizations of which we are members, with the aim of preventing the marginalization of the African continent and ensuring that it receives priority treatment on the agenda of the international community.

Because we actively uphold this view, Portugal has proposed to its European Union partners that a Euro-African summit take place, open to the participation of all African States without exception, so as to allow for a political dialogue at the very highest level on issues of mutual concern. The goal is to achieve a new dimension to our relations and provide a further impulse to traditional areas of mutual cooperation in order to create the foundations of a new global partnership. The 15 Member States of the European Union have already recognized the interest and importance of this initiative.

In this manner, we are seeking to include Africa in all its aspects on the international agenda, stressing, on the one hand, the scale and economic potential of the African continent, which is deserving of a new approach and a new model for dialogue, and, on the other hand, encouraging African countries to embark on their own process of development based on the promotion of peace, democracy, stability and economic and social progress.

We supported from the very beginning the creation and establishment of the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution by the Organization of African Unity at the Cairo summit in 1993.

Portugal attaches great importance to strengthening the dialogue between the European Union and the Southern African Development Community. The second ministerial summit, planned for this October in Windhoek, will certainly allow for a global review of the adequacy of the activities undertaken as a result of the Berlin conference.

Portugal, a member of the troika of observers to the peace process in Angola, continues to be particularly engaged in the implementation of the Lusaka Protocol, which seeks, in general terms, the re-establishment in Angola of constitutional democratic life and the formation of a single national army.

I take this opportunity to salute the Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Alioune Blondin Beye, whose negotiating skills constitute an important factor in placing peace and hope in a better future once more on the horizon for all Angolans.

We note with satisfaction the positive developments that have taken place over the last few months in the implementation of the Lusaka Protocol, which have permitted the cessation of hostilities throughout the entire territory of Angola. However, we cannot ignore the fact that important tasks remain to be completed, without which the irreversibility of the peace process cannot be guaranteed. The postponement of the resolution of military and political questions is difficult to understand and may jeopardize the process of consolidating peace.

Allow me therefore to recall the concerns expressed in the declaration of the troika of observers — Portugal, the Russian Federation and the United States — issued on 22 August 1996. I appeal to the Government of Angola and to UNITA to continue to follow the path of peace they have set out on in order to contribute decisively to the full implementation of the Lusaka Protocol, namely through one armed force and the creation of conditions for the free movement of people and goods, which would make possible the normal functioning of society, the economy and the institutions in that great African country.

I should also like to appeal to the international community to support the reconstruction and rehabilitation of Angola. In particular, it is urgent that the necessary funds be made available for the implementation of the programmes for the demobilization of former combatants. Social stability is indispensable to the success of the peace process.

I would not like to end this reference to Africa without expressing concern for the situation currently prevailing in the Great Lakes region, which has tragic repercussions on the security and well-being of innocent peoples. Portugal is participating in the efforts of the international community to bring to an end this tragedy of the African continent and to ensure the return of stability to that region.

Portugal did not remain indifferent to the suffering of the peoples of the Balkans or to a situation with serious consequences for peace and stability in the region. Portugal therefore participates in the Implementation Force with a significant military, police and civilian contingent, very often demonstrating a greater effort and engagement than that of other countries with larger economic capacities.

The recent elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina represented an important step towards the consolidation of peace, and we are confident that they will have a lasting effect on the consolidation of the Bosnian State — based on its two entities — allowing for a self-sustained stability of the country and the reconfiguration of the International Force so as not to affect the fundamental goal of guaranteeing peace and the coexistence of the three communities.

Portugal will be the host country for the next summit of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), which will take place in Lisbon on 2-3 December next. We hope that the 53 Heads of State and Government will take substantial decisions with regard to the cornerstone principles of a security model for the twenty-first century. I am certain that the Lisbon charter, to be adopted at that meeting, will represent a significant step towards the stability of the European continent and the institutional strengthening of the OSCE.

Portugal has promoted closer and deeper ties with the countries of the Mediterranean, especially those of the Maghreb, a region of fundamental importance for the security, stability and development of the entire region. In the short term, it is necessary to adopt confidence-building measures that would contribute to launching the foundations of a new type of relationship between the peoples of both sides of the Mediterranean. Portugal is committed to the creation of a Euro-Mediterranean charter, a matrix for a new partnership that will contribute decisively to the political, economic, social and cultural development of our Mediterranean partners.

Portugal is following with great concern the latest developments in the Middle East peace process.

We believe that the future of the region depends essentially on the will of the parties urgently to restart the negotiations in accordance with the principles of Madrid and the Oslo terms of reference. I appeal to all interested parties to exhibit restraint and to honour previously assumed commitments, which is the only way to achieve a just, comprehensive and lasting peace for the region. The dramatic incidents that have just occurred are the clearest demonstration that there is no alternative to the peace process.

Portugal has very strong human, historical and cultural ties with Latin America. The next Ibero-American Summit, which will take place in Chile, will represent another occasion to debate the important advances that the processes of democratization and development have achieved on that continent. Furthermore Portugal welcomes the holding in 1998 of the seventh Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State and Government.

Portugal welcomes the projects for inter-American regional integration, as well as the mechanisms for cooperation, that have been gradually established between the countries of that continent and the European Union.

The development of a relationship with Asia also constitutes one of the Government of Portugal's foreign-policy priorities. We share a common historical heritage with many countries in that region. At the bilateral level, in addition to opening new embassies in South-East Asia, we will be seeking to strengthen even further our relationship with the Pacific island States, which will certainly be reflected in the framework of the Lomé Convention.

In terms of our multilateral participation, we hope that the new dialogue created in the framework of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) will represent a significant step in the relationship between Europe and Asia, leading to a more open and broader contact on all matters of mutual interest to the European Union and Asia.

The transitional process in Macao, to be completed at the end of 1999, based on a constructive dialogue and close cooperation with China, is of the greatest importance to the Government of Portugal, whose fundamental concern is to guarantee the prosperity and stability of the territory, as well as to preserve its identity.

The multilateral dynamic is undeniably gaining an ever-greater importance in the international realities of the present. Portugal has been developing unequivocal efforts towards strengthening its participation in the organizations to which it already belongs and becoming involved in new multilateral frameworks. Clear evidence of Portugal's attitude in this respect is our increasing participation in peacekeeping operations. Portugal has considerable forces in Bosnia and Angola, and currently has the sensitive responsibility of ensuring command of the United Nations force in the Western Sahara. I am pleased to note that in the domain of peacekeeping and international security, we are the European Union's sixth-largest troop contributor to United Nations peacekeeping operations, and the ninth largest among those countries that make up the Western European and other States group. We are clearly in the top half of the list of countries that contribute forces to United Nations peacekeeping operations. We also lead other Member States with greater resources and per capita output.

Portugal's candidature for membership of the Security Council should be considered as an important expression of the will of my country to continue to participate, as fully as possible, in the multilateral dimension of today's world. Portugal is a country with a universalist commitment, which is used to establishing contact with many and diverse regions of the world, and to understanding and accepting different cultures and civilizations.

We therefore believe that as a member of the Security Council we would be able to contribute to finding solutions in accordance with the principles and purposes enshrined in the Charter. We also believe that participation in the Security Council by States of a size and with characteristics similar to those of Portugal would contribute to greater equilibrium and representativity in the decisions taken by that body.

This will be possible only when full respect is given to the principle of sovereign equality of all Member States, which, in truth, represents the principal guarantee of democracy in the Security Council. Yet this principle has not been observed in practice. Indeed, out of the 185 Member States, 79 have never served on the Security Council and 44 have served only once, as is the case with Portugal.

We can and should improve this situation. Indeed, to guarantee adequate representation by Member States on the Security Council, obstacles or precedents must not be used that would prevent a healthy rotation in that organ. For these reasons, the Portuguese candidature for membership of the Security Council is based on its own merits. We refuse to resort to any alliances, coalitions or other artificial means that would limit and condition the right of choice of Member States.

Portugal's candidature was not launched to defend interests or to respond to the demands of domestic politics, nor was it launched to pursue or consolidate external ambitions. Portuguese foreign policy is an undivided whole. It is part of, and evolves within, a well-defined geo-strategic space. It is not based on arrogance or economic power, nor has it been altered to accommodate Portugal's candidature. The foreign policy of my country is based consistently on its universalist commitment to dialogue with all the peoples of the world.

Before concluding, I should like to cast my vote of confidence in the future of the United Nations and to reiterate Portugal's full commitment to the reform of the Organization.

The Acting President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Niger, His Excellency Mr. André Salifou.

Mr. Salifou (Niger) (*interpretation from French*): It gives me great pleasure to convey to Mr. Razali Ismail the heartfelt congratulations of the delegation of Niger on his outstanding election to the presidency of the United Nations General Assembly at its fifty-first session. His election is testimony to the high esteem and prestige enjoyed by his country, Malaysia, in international affairs for its contribution to the attainment of the ideals of our Organization. It is also recognition of the fact that he is a seasoned diplomat and a man of great experience.

I extend my congratulations to the other officers of the Assembly, and we assure Mr. Razali of the full cooperation of the delegation of Niger in the discharge of his duties. I should like to convey to his predecessor, Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral of Portugal, our great pleasure at, and our compliments on, the excellent job he did during his presidency.

The President of the Republic of Niger, General Ibrahim Maïnassara Barré, reaffirms his unreserved support for and encouragement to the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, for his tireless efforts for peace and development. As the Assembly knows, this support was demonstrated to the Secretary-General at the recent Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), when my country joined the unanimous tribute to him.

I know that my country's decision to propose one of our sons as a possible candidate for the post of Secretary-General has given rise to much comment. Let me here make it clear that Mr. Hamid Algabid, the candidate in question, is simply a "candidate for the candidacy". In other words, if in the coming weeks no veto opposes the re-election of Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali as Secretary-General, Africa would only stand to gain. It would be perfectly normal for a son of our continent, who is just as qualified as his predecessors, to enjoy, as they did, a second mandate at the head of our distinguished Organization.

The annual session of the General Assembly gives my country an opportunity to renew its faith in the ideals and principles of the United Nations Charter. The fiftieth anniversary of our Organization, which we commemorated last year, gave us an opportunity to look at the progress made and to define the priorities on which we should focus. Among those priorities is joint action by the international community to reduce the economic imbalance between the nations of the North and the nations of the South. Unfortunately, the map of economic and social development of the world contains a geography of contrasts and disparities, although there were reasonable hopes that the end of the cold war would facilitate the mobilization of the international community for development.

Everywhere, and more specifically in the countries of the South, poverty is the greatest threat to political stability and social cohesion. The destitution of the shanty towns, the destitution of the street children, and absolute poverty are a disgrace to us all, and they will be as long as we see marginalization as inevitable. As the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Frederico Mayor, stated so well:

> "From poverty to marginalization, from marginalization to exclusion: this is how the most fertile breeding ground for violence is created."

It is this violence which we must avoid, by offering better alternatives to the peoples to whom we are responsible — most particularly in Africa. Indeed, this continent shows signs of being a land full of vitality, capable of major economic achievements, if the international community gives us a chance and the resources. Accordingly, the commitments jointly entered into in the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s are as relevant as ever. And more than ever they require that greater efforts be made for Africa by other members of the international community.

The question of external debt, and in particular the question of multilateral debt, which was given special attention at the G-7 summit in Lyon deserves radical, urgent treatment. Niger fully supports the recommendations adopted at the mid-term review of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa. We welcome the launching on 15 March 1996 of the United Nations System-wide Initiative on Africa. We hope that this programme, which is in any case an important framework for cooperation, will make it possible to ensure sustainable economic and social development in Africa.

Official Development Assistance — quite rightly identified as one of the main conditions for the revitalization of the African countries — should be increased to the level indicated in the resolutions adopted on this subject. At the upcoming Singapore meeting of the World Trade Organization appropriate follow-up action should be taken to ensure that the rights and interests of all countries, and in particular of the African countries, be protected. Likewise, the provision of technical and financial assistance to implement horizontal and vertical policies to diversify exports will give African countries the means for greater economic independence.

Since the end of the cold war, our Organization has certainly had some success in the maintenance of international peace and security. Among these successes was the coming into being of a democratic and multiracial South Africa and the end of the disastrous war in Mozambique. We have also made significant progress in the peace process in Angola, in the crisis in the Middle East and in the former Yugoslavia, in particular the holding a few days ago of elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Niger is following closely the efforts undertaken by the authorities in Rwanda to overcome the aftermath of the tragic events we all witnessed and in particular to consolidate national reconciliation and lasting peace.

The situation in Liberia has seen a change for the better after the recent Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) summit devoted to that country. Niger supports the recommendations which emerged from it and has decided, despite our own financial difficulties, *inter alia*, to strengthen the structure of the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) in Liberia by sending a contingent of about 500 men. My country believes, however, that these efforts will only be successful with the valuable support of the international community, which *inter alia* must honour its commitments to this country.I take this opportunity to commend the tireless efforts made in Liberia by Nigeria, the great friend and brother of Niger.

Somalia also deserves support. My country has been following with great interest the evolution of the situation in Western Sahara and hopes for a resumption of dialogue between the two main protagonists there so that, in the near future, efforts by made by the United Nations will finally lead to the self-determination referendum which the international community hopes to see. Concerning the sanctions imposed on Libya, Niger believes that the constructive proposals made by the authorities of that country provide a serious basis for negotiations to resolve that crisis, the consequences of which are adversely affecting the Libyan people as well neighbouring countries.

In the Middle East, for three years now, considerable progress has been made on the path to peace. Until recently, President Arafat, living among his own people, was developing a dialogue with his former enemies that, while certainly difficult, was also useful. With the support of the international community, that dialogue must go on. But unfortunately, since the return of the right wing to power in Israel, all hopes seem to have been dashed. Our Organization must shoulder its responsibilities and do everything in its power to stop the Middle East from plunging into a new war with unforeseeable consequences. If the State of Israel has the right to exist and to live in peace, the same goes for all States in the region — beginning with Palestine.

Niger is similarly concerned about the serious situation in Jammu and Kashmir and hopes that the international community will discuss it further. It is indispensable that in that region of the world as well, and with the encouragement of all countries of good will, that wisdom and dialogue prevails, so that in the near future the people of Kashmir can finally exercise freely their inalienable right to self-determination.

Disarmament and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons, have a central role to play in conflict prevention and the promotion of peace and economic and social development. This is why Niger renews its appeal for universal accession to international conventions and treaties that relate to weapons of mass destruction, and in particular to the cornerstone treaty: the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

Further efforts should be made to control conventional weapons and, generally speaking, to establish confidence-building measures among States. The signing of the Treaty of Pelindaba, on the creation of a nuclear-weapon free zone in Africa, was a source of legitimate pride. My country welcomes the adoption here in New York of the important Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which finally puts an end to the fears of millions of human beings for their lives and for their environment. It is certainly a significant step towards nuclear non-proliferation. Niger was among the sponsors of the resolution submitted by Australia, and will be signing the Treaty in the near future. We hope that this stage, which puts an end to the risks of horizontal proliferation, will lead to a substantial reduction in existing arsenals.

Finally, as in previous years, my country will join in initiatives to be taken to combat illicit trafficking in small arms. It will also join the increasingly unanimous condemnation by the international community of the manufacture and use of those deadly devices: anti-personnel landmines.

The building of a better world, which is our common goal, is still dependent on the establishment of international relations based on the principle of cooperation and human solidarity. We have had major discussions on this subject: in Rio on the environment, in Cairo on population, in Copenhagen on social development, in Beijing on the promotion of women, in Istanbul on human settlements, and soon, in Rome, on food. All the concerns of humanity have been taken into account in the many important recommendations which emerged from those conferences and which outlined a vision of a better world. We believe that only genuine human solidarity can transform that vision into reality.

Before concluding, I would like to provide an overview of the political solution in my country. Niger is one of the African countries which, early on, chose the path of democracy. In less than five years, it has tried everything: a national conference, democratic transition, and free and transparent elections which established the institutions of our Third Republic. Following the dismissal of the Government by the National Assembly, and the dissolution of that Assembly by the President of the Republic, the ensuing elections brought about the victory of the opposition and the establishment of a power-sharing regime marked by institutional instability in which the higher interests of the country were sidelined. The resulting paralysis of State structures prompted the army to seize power. Understand me clearly: I have no wish to justify military *coups d'état*. But in Niger, the putsch was the lesser evil. At least that is how it was perceived by the people of Niger, who spontaneously organized demonstrations in support of the new regime.

As I speak to you now, Niger, having elected a new President, General Ibrahim Baré Maïnassara, is now preparing for legislative elections. The Government is doing this in cooperation with the opposition, which only last week finally agreed to hold discussions with the representatives of the presidential party and to define with it the conditions for organizing future popular elections. The two parties have agreed to abandon sterile polemics and to create the calm conditions so necessary to work effectively in the higher interests of Niger.

This shows that Africa in general, and Niger in particular, is not allergic to democracy. But in the matter at hand, what my country wants is to be given the opportunity to build to its democratic system — based, without question, on respect for human rights and freedoms — at its own pace, taking into account its own political, economic, social and cultural context. And I venture here to say that one of the dominant features of African culture is that we do not turn public administration into a dichotomy between those in power and the opposition, between those responsible for running the country and those who are excluded from that process. In Africa, we do everything together. We work together, we eat together and we manage things together. Of course, in the interest of the human community to which everyone belongs, everyone should know his rightful place in this process and everyone should play the role he has been given.

In this regard, I would like to add that even just in our subregion, West Africa, there are several examples of countries that have understood this process and that are fruitfully applying it on a daily basis. This is the case of Senegal and Burkina Faso. Let us try to find in our culture — or better in our cultures — all the elements that can enable our countries to establish a viable, properly adapted democracy, while also rejecting categorically any kind of ready-to-wear democracy that might be foisted upon us.

In conclusion, allow me to reaffirm Niger's faith in the ideals of the United Nations and in its ability to find in the solidarity of all its Members appropriate responses to the new challenges facing humanity.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.